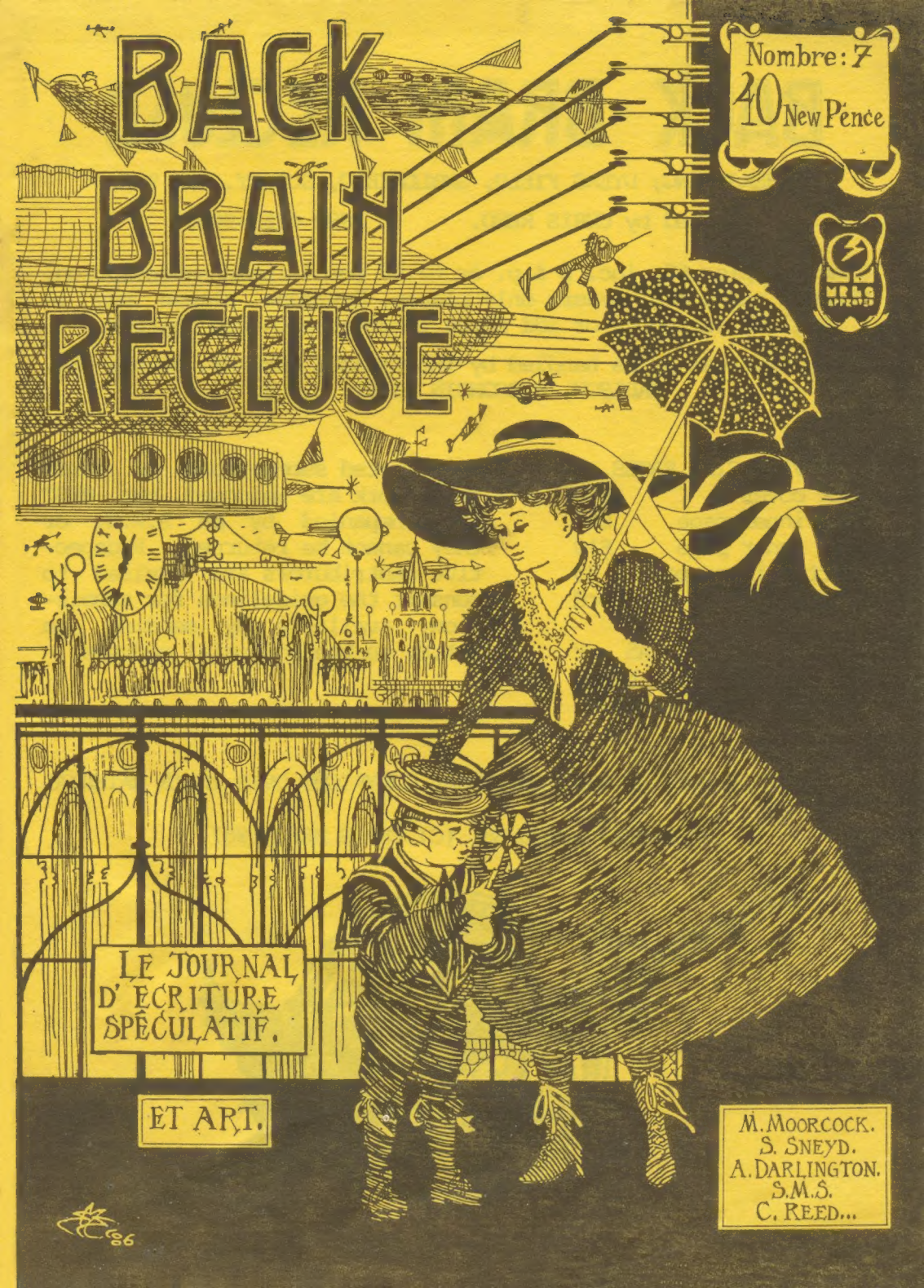
BACK BRAIN RECLUSE

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LE JOURNAL D'ECRITURE SPÉCULATIF.

ET ART.

M. MOORCOCK.
S. SNEYD.
A. DARLINGTON.
S.M.S.
C. REED...

BACK BRAIN RECLUSE

NETHERSPRING, DYERS FIELD, SMALLFIELD, SURREY. RH6 9NJ.

Edited by CHRIS REED. ISSN 0269-9990

Single copies 60p inc. p & p. or £2.00 for 4 issue subscription. Cheques and postal orders only please. Overseas please pay in English currency, or add £1.00 to cover exchange charges.

North American sales handled by THE STRANGE COMPANY, PO BOX 864, MADISON, WISCONSIN 53701, U.S.A.

ADVERTISING RATES

Back cover	£20
Full inner page	£15
Half inner page	£10
Quarter inner page	£5
Classifieds 5p per word	

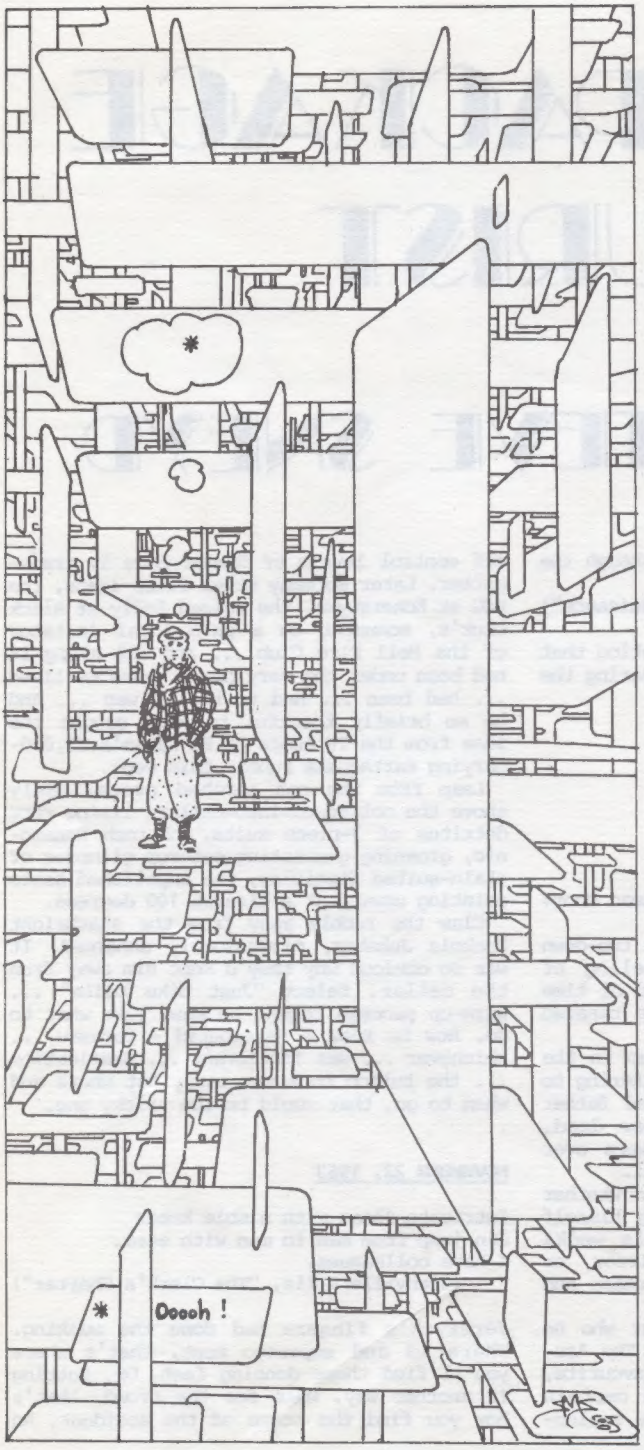
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'WINDS OF CHANGE' - COVER BY SMS

ILLUSTRATED BY SMS (pp.3, 14-15, 27), MATT BROOKER (pp.6-8) AND KAISER BILL.

SPECIAL THANKS TO MIKE MOORCOCK FOR MAKING IT POSSIBLE, AND TO ANDY DARLINGTON FOR SETTING THE BALL ROLLING. THANKS ALSO TO JOHN AND NASSER IN MADRID FOR THE USE OF THEIR FACILITIES.

NOTE: The Jerry Cornelius characters are property of Michael Moorcock and are used here with his kind permission.

THE PACKAGE TOURIST

STEVE SNEYD

"When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand."
(Raymond Chandler, "Pearls Are A Nuisance")

Waking at the controls with a sensation that hot hands twitched in his lungs, tearing the alveoli as mice gnaw pipes.

OCTOBER 12, 1980

"This gate hangs high
and hinders none.
Refresh and pay
And travel on."
(sign at White Gate Inn, Hartshead Moor)

He put the JCB through the two-up two-down on Orchard Street without any feeling of either regret or gladness. A period of time had ended, and the trash had to be cleared away, that was all.

Stanislaw was sitting on the step in the pale October sunshine, as usual muttering to himself in Polish. This self-styled father figure would of course be happier dead. Jerszyck's only real misgivings were over such an easy exit, but what the hell.

He didn't even bother to wonder whether Franczek, who persisted in calling himself his brother, was upstairs with his wodka talking to the Martians in his mirror, or down the daily calvary of betting shops and bars. He was obsolete, either way.

Three wasted years - finding out who he was, then trying to find the gate. The Arndale Shopping Centre site seemed favourite, hence the dozer-driving job. Then certain ley-line indications pointed at the sealed-off control levels of Summer Edge TV transmitter. Later so many other false leads, the RSG at Eckerswyke, the ruined folly at Black Dick's, monument to a pale local imitator of the Hell Fire Club ... and all along it had been under the very house where he lived ... had been ... had to be ... was ... And he so briefly thankful to have caught the idea from the TV shots of El Asham's 25,000-burying earthquake rubble this week.

Leap from the cab perched precariously above the collapsed-into-cellars living room detritus of 3-piece suits, 22 inch Panasonic, groaning-generating outcrop glimpses of stain-suited Stanislaw, the unpolished boots pointing upward at a bizarre 100 degrees.

Claw the rubble away from the starbright Rockola Jukebox, miraculously unharmed. It was so obvious why they'd kept him away from the cellar. Select "Just Like Eddie" ... warm-up process begun. He knew just what to do. How he knew - remembered - foresaw ... whichever ... was irrelevant ... destination ... the button code was easy, but where and when to go, that could be the tricky one.

NOVEMBER 22, 1963

Intricate fleas with nimble knees
Can jump from man to man with ease.
I have colleagues.
(Granville Ellis, "The Clerk's Charter")

Jerszyck's fingers had done the walking. Where id and superego meet, that's where you'll find those dancing feet. Or, putting it another way, make for the crowd, that's how you find the scene of the accident. An

old pickpocket and defrocked sometime Archmandrite of the First Church of Judas Christ, used the name Baalseye, he'd told him that. When, where, who cared. The point was, he'd done this right. Everyone who was anyone was here.

Sure it'd been a drag waiting in the transfer mode behind a queue like the wait to get into Ravensbruck, but then it proved his sub-quark judgement level was still on top of the pack, despite this setback-session of involuntary amnesia.

Even at final destination, the overcrowding was chronic. Lucky neither Oswald in the Book Repository nor his pal over on the knoll had been agoraphobes ... Jerszyck decided not to try to push Ms. Bruno aside ... six six lizzies in shotgun-proof NASA-coated leathers can be trouble, and anyway he was sure he remembered her as a potential split-the-gelt-down-the-middle associate from pre-Punic War days. And the rest of the kibitzers in that dust-trap were hardly likely to give him room for a view just on a quiet sayso ... not till he got the tooling-up situation a bit more on his side ... shit those Brit gun control laws, only designed to up the price and keep weaponry out of working-class hands and into better educated shoulder holsters, Eton and Walther ... Over on the knoll, though, the cluster being ignored by the key man with the look of Madison Avenue intensity seemed far less formidable. "Ta," returned his grip on the Zeiss x 8s so they flapped back heavily on their strap against the uncaringly massive bust of the Brunissima, who was still pretending not to know him, off down the stairs cursing his lack of a monofilament gun and the quick slide route out over the traffic.

"Under cover surveillance, bud, you see me not" got him through a few dozen assorted spooks busier watching each other than the crowd, and he was into the second nodal area like a dose of salts.

DECEMBER 26, 1946

It's easier plaiting frogs.
(Bizarre Angel Editorial)

"Shit, shit, shit." Jerszyck didn't care, really, about missing seeing the actual shooting of JFK for the third - or maybe it was the fourth - time he'd passed through the Dallas Time Concourse ... "Dallas of the Summer Wine" the Goodies would learn to call it for their Royal Command Performance the night Theatre War Eurosector broke out, if his forward memory served him ... but it helped to take his mind off the cold.

So did the sudden appearance among the snow-covered stumps of this shell-shocked forest of a retreating stumble of soldiers. "Fuhrer Grenadier Brigade, from the uniform, amigo," the tallest of the bearded Latins stated decisively, tapping the DSG - Castro security - patch on his olive-green jacket for emphasis.

About thirty, topside, and obviously wearied and bloodied from the futile attempt to hold open the Harlange-Donkholz Road. "Shit" ... this time the emotion was almost genuine. It was cold as a witch's tit, and Jerszyck still lacked any armament better than a flick-knife, handle a crude sculpture of Marilyn Monroe, he'd half-inched from the smallest and blackest of the Cubans back at the knoll ... Why, of all the random holds he could've got when he activated the Knoll-gate function, should it be the arse-faced Ardennes outlet.

"Probably because it's the least used, so the system, always seeking metastasis, shoved us here to balance excess travel pressure elsewhere," the fat little Greek with the tray of Ginsburgers now rapidly congealing in the snow, so that their ketchup took on the air of Cheyenne Mountain blood bank samples, said, as if reading Jerszyck's mind, or more likely the frosting breath as his lips had unconsciously shaped his thoughts.

The Germans lurched out of sight among the fallen trees. At first Jerszyck believed that, in their weariness from eight sleepless unbroken days of outnumbered battle in this endless forest, they simply hadn't noticed ... until the firing began. At least it simplified Jerszyck's problem of sorting friend from non-friend among the mixed bag of human oddities his abrupt ex-knoll transition had fetched along.

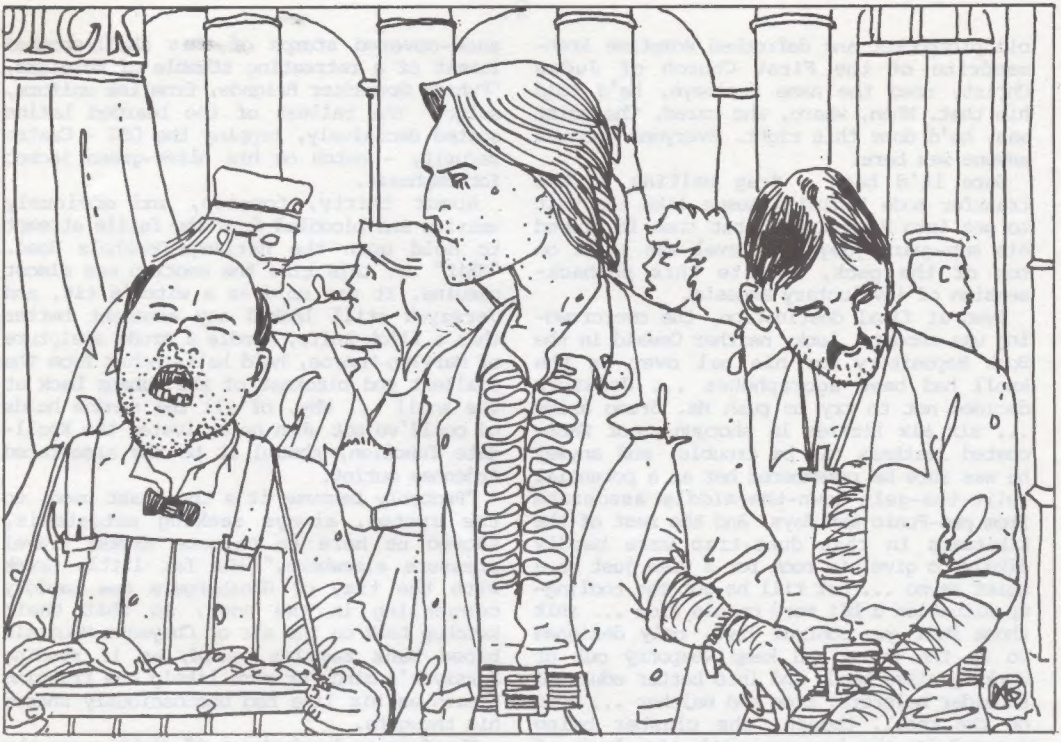
The first volley eliminated the three Cubans, dead or at least unmoving, the four youngest of the girls in Jesus K. Christ-Unwitting Avatar T-shirts whose jelly-like vibration as their busts shivered had perhaps been what first attracted the Panzers' attention, and all nine Mr. & Mrs. Mid-America non-entities.

NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1687

"How much do I hate him? How high is up?"
(Return of the Pink Panther)

At least it was simply raining here, not snowing. And Jerszyck now had but four hangers-on, followers, disciples, perhaps fans, most likely fawners, to cope with.

The greasy little Greek had clung determinedly to his tray of fodder, and now



instinctively began crying his wares, his garbled English not out of place among the many strange and tawdrily dishevelled vendors of anything from cockheel pie to mercury for Venus' ague shouting against the storm in an attempt to retain the interest and perhaps attract the custom of the shelter-bound rushing up Tower Hill and down in contradictory eddying surges.

The green-shirted Chicano with the vividly correspondent-coloured pointed shoes and massive crucifix - so shiny it must be from a Kellogg packet - round his neck, clung to Jerszyck's arm in bewilderment and fright. The last two cheerleaders, one blonde, one red-headed, showed contradictory natures, one at once obeying the shouted invitation of a masked astrologer, hung about like a parrot's cage with massive star and crescent patterned robe, to come into his chamber and hear a true and perfect personal prophesy, the which would aim at physical practise in the spirits' name, of all true physic. They saw him enfold her in his cloak, fend off the other one's vain attempts to plead: "Come back, Cindy Lou, what would your mother say, you don't even know his name."

"I, sweet Aphrodite, am the famous pathological or noted mountebank Doctor Alexander Bendo, and have true delights to offer two as well as one, so come along, you also, though I must warn you, I have experimental darts to be shot at those too greedy."

She resisted, he renewed his chatter, and then, looking up, suddenly spotted Jerszyck. "Ah, my favourite monkey ... come you too, and let us all test to the full God's joke on Man."

Jerszyck shook his head. "Sorry, Rochester, another time. Is my mother still here?"

"The fat impudent mistress of bawds who hath her hovel by His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador's down Wild Street, so she may escape the watch through diverse passages into his gardens ... aye, and doth succour priests to safety there, though they must peril soul and Faith by tasting of her wares ere she will shelter them ... aye, she still thrives."

"Tell her I shall return to give her what I owe."

"If it be death, then I am ready too ... I am a man who it is a universal masque to hate."

FEBRUARY 13, 1338

"The French from have tried to white-ant the Jaguar deal almost from the beginning."

(Guardian, August 12, 1980)

"Ignore them ... they are too far gone in wine and mutual hate to remember my presence, let alone yours."

Baalseye smiled fatly across the platter-heaped table. At its head, piled like herring, five men in doubleted finery sprawled among spilled goblets. Unheeded, in a far corner where a glassless narrow arch gave tantalising glimpses of the high peaks jagged as paper cut-outs under the moon, a musician played the lute. Doubtless at Baalseye's instruction and tuition, he was playing Bessie Smith's "Empty Bed Blues", with enthusiasm if not skill, so that the result was like donkeys braying.

Jerszyck shook his head ... his eyes aching. Weariness, or sorrow not to have been able again to meet his mother and indulge in the curious amalgam of fondness and contempt that made her so refreshingly useful, if only in enabling him to define himself as anything she was not ... or merely a continued conviction that he was forgetting something vital.

The little Greek produced a dismantled AK 47 from beneath his festering point-of-sale offerings, and, lizard-swift, assembled it. Baalseye smiled on, murmuring, as if in blessing: "Ah that banana-shaped magazine ... the candle of the liberator, particularly if she is female and alone."

The blonde muttered: "Don't talk dirty, my ma always said, 'Lurleen, never let a man talk dirty, it shows he don't respect you.'" But she said it half-heartedly, clearly intimidated by the lack of resemblance to Dallas of anywhere they had been recently.

The Greek covered them all with a sweep of the muzzle. "Who're those faggots?" he asked, gesturing dangerously at the five inebriates.

Baalseye laughed aloud, a silvery tinkle so phony that Jerszyck wondered if he sought to anger the Hellene into precipitate action. "They, my dear boy, are no more gay - as we say these enlightened days - than you or Jerszyck here ... well perhaps -" as he licked his lips reminiscently recalling earlier times and closer acquaintanceships "- than you anyway ... they, my fine Levantine, are the Lords Ravaldini, Guido, Ravaldino, Zello, Dino, and Dino's son Francesco, and this is their house, the Castle of Monte Castello, and I, to further soothe your no doubt purposeful curiosity, I am to them their beloved spiritual adviser, the Bishop of Sarsina. Shortly, I shall retire to bed; they will awaken, certain doubts as to each other's good faith I have planted will arise, swords will be drawn, and all will be dead at each other's hand by dawn. So your gun is not needed."

MARCH 20, 33 AD

"You know a bird who'd rather have ashes than diamonds? Bring her to me."

(Julius K. Scraggs, Pennine Radio)

The hill of the tomb was lightly sprinkled with the first tiny flowers. The city far below rested in a cloak of dust like a spider in its web.

The Greek was audibly cursing that he had not been allowed to stay and watch the wops kill each other.

He had been disarmed at the moment of transit, forgetting that his power over the situation depended on its remaining reasonably static ... a shot-silk fog of whirlpool motion, the same that had at last rid them of the clinging Mexican, did not fit that definition.

Lurleen said she liked him, despite his unshaven appearance, and was even prepared to try to pronounce Odysseus Haralambos till she could get him to change it, so Jerszyck decided not to shoot him. He might be a handy diversion if Baalseye got troublesome, and anyway why should he provide the fat heretic with yet more of the "long pig" he apparently now favoured, "though only curried, I assure you, dear Cupid-of-my-dreams, I am not a complete savage, and of course I bless it with special holy water from the Three Mile Island core ... which reminds me, I am technologically rather rusty these days, will you plant this if I supply the correct location?"

The parcel appeared from its exterior to be a KD kit melamine-top fitted kitchen-compatible Hitachi video "Swings for singing lovers" unit ... but as soon as he saw it, Jerszyck had remembered what it was.

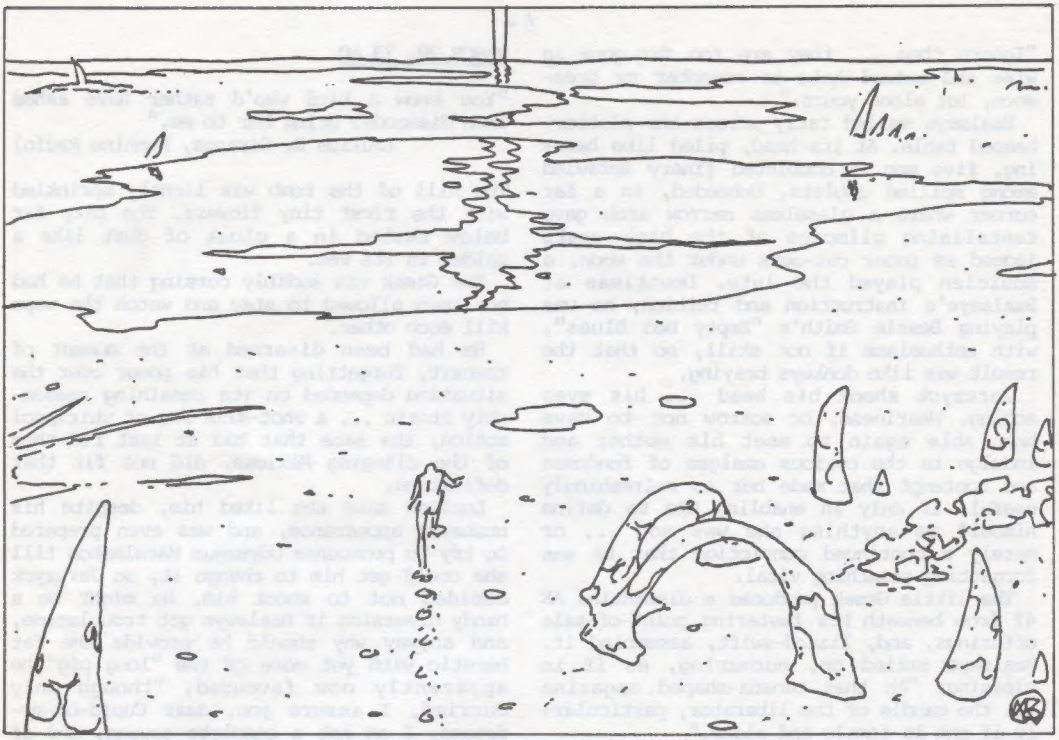
He tried to ignore Odysseus moaning away in feeble calculation behind him ... Lurleen might be okay, put a bit of weight on her, feed her up, she could plough his fields back on Skorpios, good muscles there ... but how was he to get back to collect his super-colossal splendid baksheesh, ten times the ransom of Constantinople, just for making sure that nasty WASP President was killed so his lovable chief Aristotle ... "Onassis?"

"Of course ... he want Jackie, John the Man he have her, John must die, it is very Greek, Aristotle he never forget his roots, not like some emigrants."

"Shut up, Baalseye, you're only encouraging him."

"But if he's right, just think how many of us got money under false pretenses from our employers by saying we'd killed Kennedy ... aren't you curious what makes him so sure?"

"I care even less than I care where Jim



Morrison and Lord Lucan do their drug smuggling these days ... I mean then ... I mean ... oh hell ... in there, right?"

"Precisely, my boy ... not just beautiful, clever too ... why don't I leave my ring as a clue, it might help Peter to know how to design one for his successors."

APRIL 7, 1969

"I don't see why we shouldn't change ourselves into faceless bureaucrats, certainly I feel myself capable of doing so."

(Charles Osborne, Arts Council Literature Director, speaking on the BBC)

Goodbye Candlemass, goodbye run-down to Easter Mark One. If Baalseye knew what he was doing, and despite his simperings he usually did, the sensors would detect The Body when it arrived, and the Honest John mininuke would particulate the fleshy vessel, imprint the shroud, and create the empty chamber mystery right on cue. The Greek and Lurleen would probably be very happy in the Eastern Med under Rome and, if they weren't, tough titty, let 'em eat hawkshit ... Odysseus would never have got paid anyway, he was too unshaven not to be too naive to know how to collect ... anyway a man who sweat under the arms like that would never survive the post-Dallas cement necktie party, whereas with Lurleen by his side he'd probably be a wow as a small scale entrepreneur in and around the Decapolis, and if not he could always sell her East to Parthia ... and why should Jerszyck care anyhow, he thought, directing Baalseye towards the Greyhound stop with the usual mixture of regret and relief at seeing the back of the ultimate weasel-word in human form for a day or decade or so.

Damn ... his own name stared down at his from a huge banner across the street ... "Porphyry City Welcomes Back Its Hero Son - Jerszyck Cornelszisky, We Love You."

Ah well, they'd all be up at the station waiting for the train from Albuquerque to bring him. Keep to the back-lots, he'd miss the whole parade, the speeches, the lot. After all, when you've had this homecoming from Vietnam a few dozen times, who needs another replay? Anyway, Katrin would be waiting.

Across the dusty Little League lot, round the back of the City Hall, up 7th, along the alley where they used to pinch hubcaps off the cars of the guys engrossed in their hothanded dates, and he was home. She was in the porch swing, but he dragged her straight upstairs. After all, when you've been away

for 2000 years nearly, the first thing you want is a pillowfight with your sister, tight, right? Good job he had a cassette of Meatloaf in his tastefully torn-knee jeans, seeing as they hadn't written his song yet. "She was barely 16, he was barely dressed" ... the bed bounced and the game trended towards its inevitable conclusion. Only he got her awkwardly, between bedstead and wall, and was so buzz saw busy trapped between her legs see-sawing away he forgot to remove from her sweet freckled features the pillow that provided their game's traditional starting point and excuse. It was too late when he noticed, taken aback by her passive response ... no bittersweet rocket-flight this time ... at first having accepted it as merely evidence of her stunned joy at his return.

So she was dead, and he was on the run ...

Back to his parade, if he had time, and the speeches, and let some drifter, hobo, pervert, longhair take the blame.

Only, running out, he ran into Ms. Bruno drifting gently in the swing where not twenty minutes ago instead had been his beloved, flesh of his flesh, his Katrin.

She gave him a Hershey Bar to quiet his gibbering, and said, making a Kitchener-style pointing gesture with a pearl-mouthpieced South Shan Highlands blowpipe: "Your universe needs you, son."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning no fine gestures about giving yourself up to fry for your guilt - it never pays."

"I never intended anything stupid like that," he said.

"Good ... because I have a use for you."

THE OPTIMUM OF THE ERA WE HAVEN'T QUANTIFIED YET

"We are the insects of the white man's thought."

(Chief Rami of Txucamarrae)

By the oozy shores of the fast-drying Mindanao Deep, lovemaking was uncomfortable - and the smell of giant exploded beings, dead exiles of the vanishing depths, rotting in the absence of the pressure-equilibrium they had so smoothly breasted, did not add romance to the atmosphere.

But the fee being paid by the insomniac aliens to see a re-enactment of the copulation of extinct homo sapiens made it all worthwhile. Literally, they paid the Earth.

"Nobody knows your name, but everybody loves your paint." (Berger ad)

Afterwards, tickling him with her blowpipe, Ms. Bruno said: "There's only one thing wrong with our lovelife. You need that operation to turn you into a woman - and Baalseye knows just the place and time to have it done."

"It's easy to sleep on another man's wound."
(Commandant Tom Barry, "Guerilla Days In Ireland")

Tracking shot - a lone figure running, stumbling in mud and slime and the dregs of leviathans, slipping back almost as much as he gains. Immeasurably high above, tiny against the sky that was once sea-bed too, a golden idol, perhaps a lost star hiker ... perched perilously, it could be, it is ... his escape vehicle ... his JCB.

THE END

interzone

No 18 Winter 1986

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Michael Moorcock

Michael Moorcock's association with BACK BRAIN RECLUSE goes back right to the beginning. His THE CURSE OF MAN appeared in the very first issue of the magazine in June 1984, and since then he has become a regular contributor, with THE FALCON in issue #4 and COWBOY LIGHTS OUT in issue #6.

Mike has always taken an active interest in BACK BRAIN RECLUSE, ever ready with an encouraging comment and showing an amazing willingness to get involved. At no time does the selfish ego of success rear its ugly head: Mike is happy to help out if he can and very generously includes previously unpublished work in the material he sends for the magazine.

The idea of doing a BACK BRAIN RECLUSE Moorcock Special first started to take shape when Andy Darlington and Steve Sneyd sent me stories originally commissioned in 1980 for a Jerry Cornelius anthology that never saw the light of day.

Then Mike very kindly agreed to do an interview for BACK BRAIN RECLUSE, but our hectic schedules - either he was in the States or I was in Madrid - unfortunately meant that a face-to-face meeting was impossible. A questionnaire and a cassette 'to ramble into' were used instead, followed by a second wave of questions.

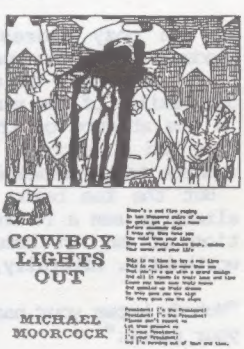
However, that does not detract from the quality of the interview, for Mike talks warmly and freely with an intuitive knack of going into the right sort of detail. The addition of musical interludes and fanfares between sections of the tape, regrettably lost on the written page, demonstrate a canny sense of humour, and show that Mike enjoyed the interview as much as I did and, I hope, the readers will as well.

It only remains for me to thank Mike most heartily not only for his support and co-operation in the preparation of the interview, and this issue of BACK BRAIN RECLUSE in general, but also for having taken such a positive attitude towards this magazine over its short history. Let us hope it will continue.

But that's enough of explanations for now. Michael Moorcock is a man of words, so let's let him speak for himself ...







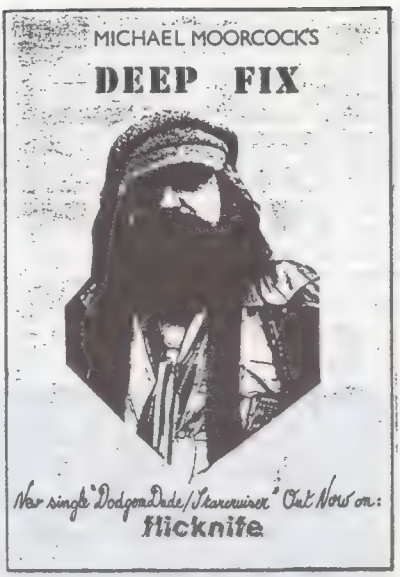
You've just returned from a couple of months in the States. Do you have a second home out there, was it merely business or was it an indulgence in your fascination for things American as found in LETTERS FROM HOLLYWOOD?

In this specific case I suppose you could say it was a bit of an indulgence in my fascination for things American, but basically I was taking my son, who's fifteen, on a Greyhound Bus trip about 8,000 miles around the United States, a modern Grand Tour! We started in New York and, mainly visiting friends, went to Washington, Atlanta, into rural Mississippi where my wife Linda's parents live and from there to Jackson Mississippi. Stayed in New Orleans for a bit, Houston Texas, where my brother-in-law and sister-in-law live, and then on to Los Angeles. From L.A. we went back to New York via the Grand Canyon, Denver and Chicago. Every city we hit said it was experiencing the hottest weather since records were kept. A 'real temperature' of 117 degrees in New Orleans!

It was a pretty gruelling trip. It was the worst bus trip I've ever made in my life. Those buses are extremely uncomfortable, and I hadn't realised that. I originally decided to do the trip because Max's sister was going with him, then she couldn't do it, so I volunteered. I think if I were twenty years younger or even thirty years younger I'd've enjoyed it better, but it's extremely uncomfortable, excruciatingly painful most of the time, and you don't get much sleep if you've planned a schedule where you expect to sleep on the bus, which is what I'd done.

So I did forty hours between Houston and L.A. sitting up in pain most of the time, swollen feet and legs, and by the time I arrived I was completely wrecked. I started out wrecked having wanted to finish the first draft of MOTHER LONDON before I went. Which is a boring answer to a question that I think expected something a bit more interesting.

My interest in the States does continue, I probably will wind up living there, I don't have a second home there, I couldn't afford a second home in Los Angeles, but one day what we hope to do perhaps is exchange places with somebody in the States so we can do three to six months in L.A. and six months here. At the moment Linda is very homesick for California and almost can't stand living in London - she likes England and she likes London to look at, but she can't get on with most Londoners, as many Americans can't. They find them cold and stand-offish and condescending too. I think it's the condescending aspect which Americans get most pissed off with. So that's it really, I did a little bit of business but not much.



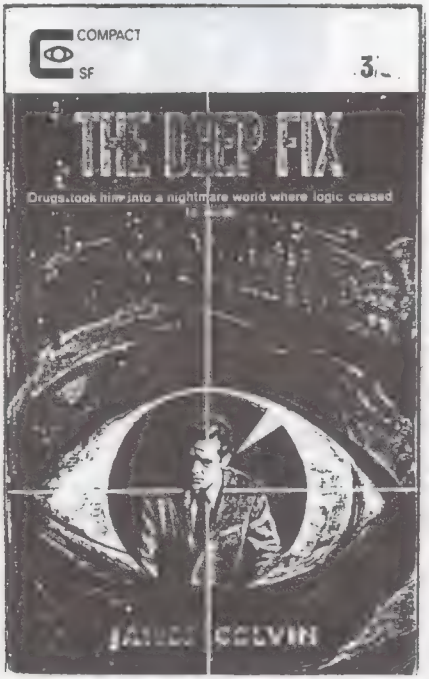
Your other recent book THE CITY IN THE AUTUMN STARS captures excellently the atmosphere and style of the period in which it is set, as did WARHOUND before it. How much research and background work do you have to do before you start a period piece such as that?

In the case of these two books I didn't have to do very much, I mean not the kind of intensive background research I do on some books because I know the periods fairly well and I've got a flavour of the period and read quite a bit of work written in that period, so I would say not a huge amount of research and background work for a period piece such as that.

But for something like BYZANTIUM ENDURES or THE LAUGHTER OF CARTHAGE it can take a year's really intense research before I'm ready even to begin trying to put it all down. It means learning foreign languages and getting out obscure maps and checking up on odd dates where people might have been at particular times. That really does take an enormous amount of energy and I go pretty crazy, I get so absorbed in it that I actually can look out of the window and see the Grand Bazaar, Istanbul, in 1920, that's how intense it gets. So it goes from one extreme to another, some things obviously I don't research at all.

Something like the Pyat quartet demands

much more because it's leading up to present, it's all remembered history, I mean history that people can remember. It's very different, I don't see those books as historical novels in the same way that say THE CITY IN THE AUTUMN STARS is, or even THE BROTHEL IN ROSENSTRASSE is. It's because they're about the 20th century and they sort of link up with the rest of the stuff I've written on the 20th century. I see them as part of my on-going obsession with modern history, the present day.



The Cornelius and Pyat series and the von Bek books all seem to be set in periods of great political and social flux. Does this reflect your interest in anarchy?

I'm interested in periods of flux because as much as anything else I'm interested in the way that people experience and rationalise them. I like to know how people explain their condition during a period of great upheaval, because frequently it's very different from the way we see it in retrospect. I don't know if it reflects my interest in anarchy - I see things obviously from an anarchist viewpoint, from an egalitarian viewpoint or whatever, so I suppose it does reflect my interests in anarchy, although the two pretty much run together.

Have you any plans for one set in Spain?

I do have plans for one set in Spain because I'll be dealing with the Spanish Civil War in the third or fourth volume of the Pyat books. It's inevitable he's got to get into the Spanish Civil War in some disgusting capacity.

In some books you claim simply to have "translated" someone else's manuscript. Do you in fact speak any other languages?

As a matter of fact I don't actually speak another language! The weird thing is I learnt Russian for BYZANTIUM ENDURES, I learnt Turkish for THE LAUGHTER OF CARTHAGE and a smattering comes back to me, but it's short term learning and I suppose it's just useful for that sort of thing. I've travelled a lot in Europe and so I've got a kind of peculiar patois that seems to serve me almost anywhere I go. I think you should always try to speak the language of the country you're in, but then, if you give up, hope that somebody speaks your language. But I haven't got any sophisticated knowledge of other languages, certainly in my conscious mind, after I've been using them for a specific purpose.

The Cervantine technique of merely being the conveyor of the text rather than the original author is something that obviously appeals to you. Do you, like Cervantes, enjoy playing with the reader by setting up different layers of reality?

Yes, I like that technique because you achieve distance by means of it. You also get a sense of authority from something like that. I know some critics have decided I'm trying to 'fool' people into believing somehow that I came by these texts from grandfathers or old men in Portobello Road or whatever. Of course I'm not doing that. It's a traditional literary device which Edgar Rice Burroughs used and probably that's where I got it from. I could dignify it by saying it came from more respectable surces, but I think that's how I came by it originally. I like the method.

I think I've probably over-used it recently ... Currently MOTHER LONDON has none of that in it, it's just a book, It's just a novel by me with a very very different feel to it compared to anything else I've done. It's more realistic, naturalistic ...

But yes, I do enjoy not so much playing with the reader by setting up different layers of reality but suggesting to the reader that there are different layers of

reality, different interpretations of events, different interpretations of, you know, simply moving one's hand at this moment in time. I think that's why I originally preferred some form of non-linear narrative because a linear plot will impose interpretation and I've tried to avoid that in a lot of books. The Pyat books I can't do anything but write in a straightforward, almost Wagnerian way with the themes slowly developing and very slowly emerging over the four books. That's a much more conventional technique but in some ways more difficult for me to handle because I'm not used to writing straight linear narrative on that scale, with that amount of ambition.



Do you subscribe to Tolstoy's objective or Dostoyevsky's subjective view of reality? The Pyat series seems very much the latter.

I suppose it's subjective. I wouldn't otherwise put myself very close to Dostoyevsky. I think that reality is in the eye of the beholder to a large extent, I mean obviously for ordinary day-to-day living it's as well to agree on there being some form of objective reality; just getting along in relationships you have to do that, otherwise nobody communicates at all! Yes, the Pyat series are very much a subjective view of reality. That's his subjective view! Since I believe that everybody's view is subjective I've taken a supersubjective character to make that point.

You're on record as saying that the Pyat series is just the introduction to something bigger. What form will this magnum opus take?

In a sense it is. The four Pyat books are really preparing the ground up to 1940 for MOTHER LONDON and novels that will follow MOTHER LONDON which I think will be rather different, certainly structurally very different. I don't know about "magnum opus". I always try to take a larger risk with every new main project that I begin, but of course the projects can take five to ten years anyway so you never know how thay're going to turn out.

Can you say some more about MOTHER LONDON?

It's an extremely ambitious structure, it's fundamentally non-linear, it uses a duodecimal system whereas I've used a decimal system for structuring say the Cornelius books. That is to say I use units of twelve to put it together and as a result the structure is quite hard to pull off. More complex. The demands on me made by that structure are pretty hair-raising, too, and it's taken me quite a lot of time to do what I'm supposed to do. I've also used a far more specific sonata form for this too, so that the, as it were, 'movements' in the book, the different sections, should have the feel of movements in a sonata.

That one at the moment I'm not at all satisfied with, it exists in a huge rough draft. It's finished but not by any means completed as a novel, and both Linda and my agent think it needs a lot of work whereas a couple of other people who read it as it were "casually" while it was lying aroung the house both were enthusiastic about it, so it's hard for me to say with any form of objectivity what I think of MOTHER LONDON. But I do believe it's going to be perhaps the most satisfying thing for me that I've ever written when it's finished. If I pull it off. There's a lot more autobiography and stuff like that in it. I think I will pull it off ... I usually do. If I don't die first!

How is a typical working day comprised?

That's very difficult ... A typical working day once I'm actually working is just pretty much: Get up in the morning, work at the typewriter, have lunch, go out, do a bit of shopping maybe or a bit of housework or something like that, just to break the day

JOHN DEE'S SONG

BEING A POEM BY

In my skull's a multiplicity of spheres,
An infinity of Albions –
And in one Dee is King
And she the Sage
(Would she then lust for me
And I refuse to hear her beating blood?)
World upon world
A sea of globes
And only rarely do two meet
Thus I discourse; I bow
(Ah! These pantaloons! A eunuch of me'll make I'trow.)
"Oh, *venerable* Dee – *respected* sir;
So *noble* and *refined* ..."
(She cannot guess what thoughts do burn
In my tormented mind)

And now a word on Nature
Next on God and Good
On Love and Death –
On Art – and High Arithmetik
(How to restrain this leaping prick?)
"Madam I take my leave, if you'll permit!"
Another bow – oh, my blade! I weep!
As through the door I lurch – groaning for surcease ...
– Good *morrow*, Doctor Dee *(Girl speaks)*
"Aside! Aside!"
– Advice good sage, I pray ...
(She'll quench me, temp'ry bride)
"Come quickly, maid, to my bedside
And I will fill thee full of my philosophy ..."

And I will fill thee full
And I will fill thee full
Fill thee full ...

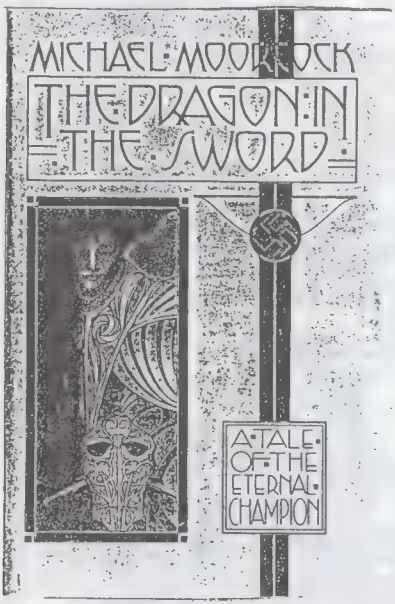
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by MICHAEL MOORCOCK


MICHAEL
MOORCOCK

up, keep reality in perspective, and then go through till six or seven, although I'm always working in my head. Linda complains that I say I only work nine to five but in fact I'm working the whole time I'm doing a book, particularly a long ambitious book like MOTHER LONDON. That's an ordinary typical day when I'm actually working.

When I'm not working, when I'm leading up to working, I get the very common anxiety symptoms most people experience when they're leading up to a piece of work, whether they're actors or musicians or whatever, particularly if it's an ambitious difficult piece of work, and so I flounder around pretending I'm working or pretending I've got the day structured when in fact it's no such thing. So typical working days depend really on the state at which the work is. Once running, I'm fine.



How do you set about writing a novel? How many drafts and rewrites do you generally have to go through before you're satisfied with the finished product?

It depends entirely on the novel. For THE DRAGON IN THE SWORD I did one draft and didn't read it, so that when the editor asked if they could make a few minor changes I said they could so long as they didn't show them to me because I wouldn't know what they were talking about. I can honestly say I've only read bits of about half my novels, I've never read them all the way through. Some novels I've read all the way through, but half of them I haven't read all the way through. DRAGON was a one-draft. WARHOUND I think was one draft, and THE CITY IN THE AUTUMN STARS was a bit weird because it was really two novels and I had to cut the second novel out of it, which I still have, and that took quite a bit longer.

It depends what you mean by draft because I use photocopies a lot. I keep working over and over and over the same sheets effectively, so what would be for somebody else maybe three or four drafts only appears as one draft, and then I photocopy another lot of other sheets and carry on working that way. In terms of typing full length all the way through I usually do just two drafts, the first draft and the final draft, but there's an enormous amount of work in between them.

So far as the finished product is concerned, I don't think I'm ever satisfied with the finished product but you reach a point where you think oh well, fuck it, that's it, I'm not going to do any more on it. Even now. I mean at this moment, there's an American edition of BROTHEL IN ROSENSTRASSE coming out and I'm making sort of small corrections to that. I do that fairly frequently, I'm never that happy with the result of what I've done.

Have you ever worked on a word processor, or considered using one for your writing?

I'm frequently tempted by word processors - I think they're great - but I still write whole novels in longhand in notebooks sometimes. THE LAUGHTER OF CARTHAGE for instance was mostly longhand. My methods would need to change drastically for me to benefit from a word processor. Maybe they will eventually.

Do you work on a number of novels simultaneously or do you take a break from the larger works to write the one-offs?

In a sense they're all intersecting, even the fantasies, even THE DRAGON IN THE SWORD to some extent intersects with the Pyat novels, so they're all there in my head. Yes I do take a break from the larger works to write the one-offs, the fantasies. I think I'd go crazy if I kept working that intensely. If I went crazy it wouldn't necessarily matter except that I'd find myself without friends or family, which is very important to me! More important than writing in the long run.

Why do you write? It must be more than just a means of paying the rent.

It's a compulsion, well, not so much a compulsion as a vocation. I don't think I'm 'compulsed' to write much, but I've been writing ever since I can remember and writing with a view to publication almost since I can remember. And since I started professionally selling stuff at fifteen I've never really looked back. That's the way I've always earned my living, so I'd find it very difficult to change that now.

Yes, certainly it's more than a means of paying the rent, I could do a lot easier things than what I do. I write because I feel an urge, a need, a calling to write, and I also write because I believe that if you don't put everything you've got into what you're doing and use your talent to the best of your ability then it's hardly worth doing at all. It just gets boring and it's insulting to the reader. Of course I don't put my full talent behind something like THE DRAGON IN THE SWORD, although I hope I put enough of it!

In the 1970s you actively encouraged other writers to use the Jerry Cornelius characters. How do you feel about the way the characters were handled? Were there things that did not work, etc.?

Well in a way I did encourage them, but actually it all happened pretty spontaneously. People started using them and I started saying it was okay, that's how it went. I felt differently about different ways that people handled the characters, I thought that M. John Harrison added a tremendous amount and really understood the form and did marvellously, and I borrowed from him as much as he borrowed from me. Others, like Brian Aldiss, although sort of amiable didn't get it at all and, well, it worked as it worked. The Moebius strip in France was a Jerry Cornelius strip and Moebius had never read a Jerry Cornelius story, he just picked up ideas from other prople talking about him enthusiastically. So there were things that didn't work for some stories and things that worked amazingly for others, as with the Harrison stories.

Do you still feel it's important to promote and encourage new writers in the 1980s?

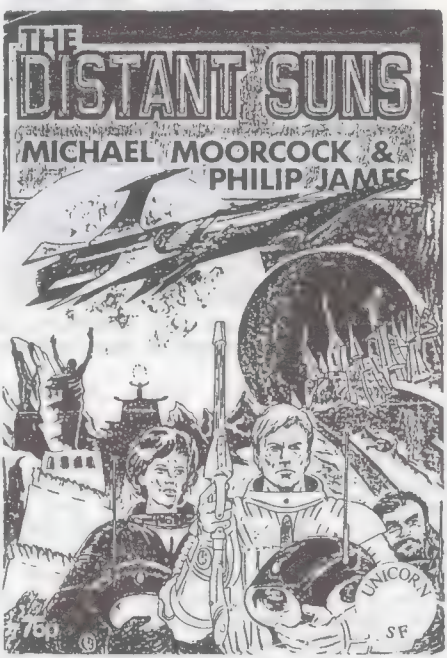
Where I can, I mean I haven't got the means of doing it now and I will do it where I can, yes. I certainly think it's important for other people to do it: I'll sort of cheer from the wings but I really wouldn't spend too much time doing it myself now, I think I've paid my dues in that line.

Is that why you've taken such an active interest in BACK BRAIN RECLUSE?

Yes, it probably is. That's it in a nutshell.

Yet why were you reported in INTERZONE 3 as having said that three INTERZONEs was like three Shredded Wheat?

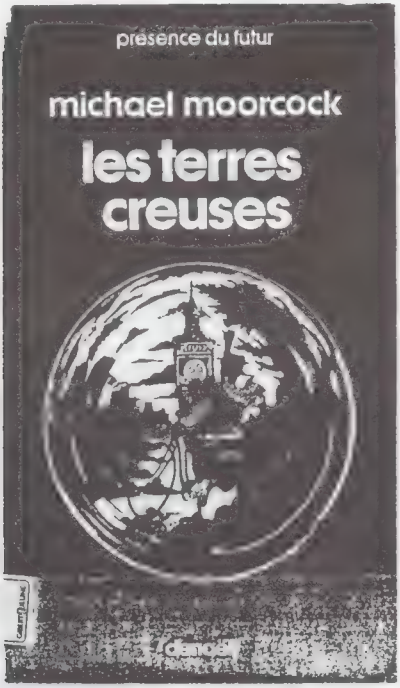
I didn't say anything about three INTERZONEs being like three Shredded Wheat, I've never made any reference to Shredded Wheat I don't think in my life! I'm not that happy with INTERZONE. I think it didn't take enough risks, it didn't encourage enough new writers, it was a disappointment to me. You could argue that at least there is a magazine that is publishing some people and I'd agree with that, but I've had these arguments with the editors. The other thing is there's a tendency to talk about filling the 'gap' that NEW WORLDS left, and I'd like to see something rather fresher and different, and it seemed to me that INTERZONE was rather conservative and cautious.



Have you any more musical projects planned?

I was supposed to be doing something with New Order this year and I just haven't got round to it. There's a lot of things I'd like to be doing musically but I'm still trying to catch up on a backlog of novels

which always take precedence. I'd really like GLORIANA to have been made properly because I think Pete Pavli and I have got some smashing songs and tunes on that, really lovely melodies, complex stuff. Also THE ENTROPY TANGO has some nice music, but I don't know, perhaps one day I'll do it. Savoy Records want me to do something ...



Do particular writers have a certain influence on particular areas of your writing?

I suppose so. I'm not wholly conscious of them nowadays but I've still got enthusiasms. Of the 19th century George Meredith is my great idiosyncratic enthusiasm. Peter Ackroyd, Rose Macaulay, Angus Wilson, Don Delillo ... I love Eudora Welty and and a lot of the Southern women writers that are around now. Ellen Gilchrist, for instance. I'm not a great Flannery O'Connor fan actually ... I like Faulkner ... I don't know, there's been a lot of writers I like, or have liked, and my enthusiasm for them has been pretty obvious - Peake, Ballard, Dickens ... At one time Borges although I'm not as great an enthusiast for Borges as I was - I was one of the people promoting Borges over here before he was ever published in the United Kingdom. He had been published by I think either City Lights or one of those San Francisco presses, or maybe Evergreen, I can't remember, he had been published in America before he was published here. I heard Borges related to me by a Spanish-speaking Swede before I actually read any, so that's what first made me an enthusiast for Borges, not reading Spanish, although I have done some Spanish translating, or rather I claimed to speak Spanish in order to do some translating in my early career. So I like Borges, but I'm not as interested in that kind of South American writing as I used to be.

There might be certain influences in particular areas of my writing. But I think I've now reached a point where I've got a number of styles that I can call on. They may well be amalgams of other people's styles or borrowings or whatever you call it, but they feel like my own now and I don't think I could pin down a specific influence. I'm enormously admiring of Andrea Dworkin. She's influenced my plitical thinking but not my style. Robin Morgan, Kate Millett ...

Where did your interest in the Harlequin/Pierrot/Columbine triangle come from?

I'm not sure, I've always been interested in it, I've got a huge collection of that kind of imagery. The triangle is interesting because there's Harlequin the trickster, Pierrot the sort of innocent, and yet sometimes a cruel innocent (I mean sometimes he's not a 'Holy Innocent'), and Columbine is the pivot around which the whole thing moves. It's a constantly fascinating theme to me - one that you can just run and run and run, and it does mirror a great deal of how we perceive real life, I think.

In a triangle situation we may well perceive the other person as the Harlequin trickster figure and ourselves as the blighted innocent, or depending on our self-image the other way round. Equally Columbine's power is a familiar kind of power, one of the few kinds of power that women have been able to call on, so it's interesting. The tensions in that eternal situation seem to reflect larger tensions thoughout society. I don't know if you know the Krazy Kat strip - Krazy Kat, Officer Pup and Ignatz the Mouse is a similar triangle that goes on and on perpetually with different wrinkles to it all the time. There's quite a few things of that kind I find fascinating - Pantomime, Punch and Judy, certain folk customs and rituals ...

And your fascination for airships?

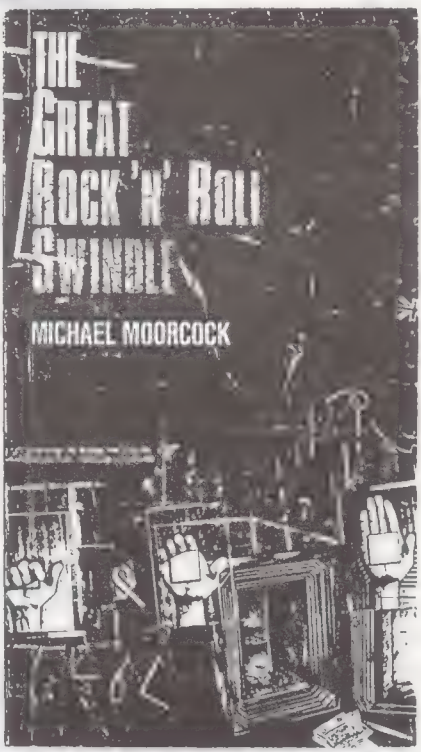
My fascination for airships goes back as long as I can remember too, and it's very hard to say where and when it began. I've ridden in airships, recently the Skyship - the new British airship that flies out of Cardington where the old airship hangers are - I've been up in that a couple of times - and it's a marvellous experience. There's nothing to beat airship travel. There's no thrust as in a plane so it's like a balloon. You suddenly find you've left the ground without any real sense of going up. It's weightlessness. And the manoeuvring: the specific skills of airship piloting are very strange. You've got a lot of time usually in which to make your decisions, because you're not going particularly fast, you can see a lot more, you can drop down and see more, there's all sorts of things you can do which you can't even do with a helicopter, and it certainly doesn't shudder as much as a helicopter shudders. And it's far, far safer! So all in all it's pretty ideal as a form of transport as far as I'm concerned. Great big windows so you can actually see out, all sorts of stuff like that.

I also think of giant pre-war airships as being one of the great follies of the 20th century along with I suppose the space race, the various rockets we put up. Very much tied up with national ambition and national pride and all that kind of stuff, so they do actually represent for me something more than the simple romantic image I love: the romance of the 'Aerial Liner'!

Do you have any other hobbies?

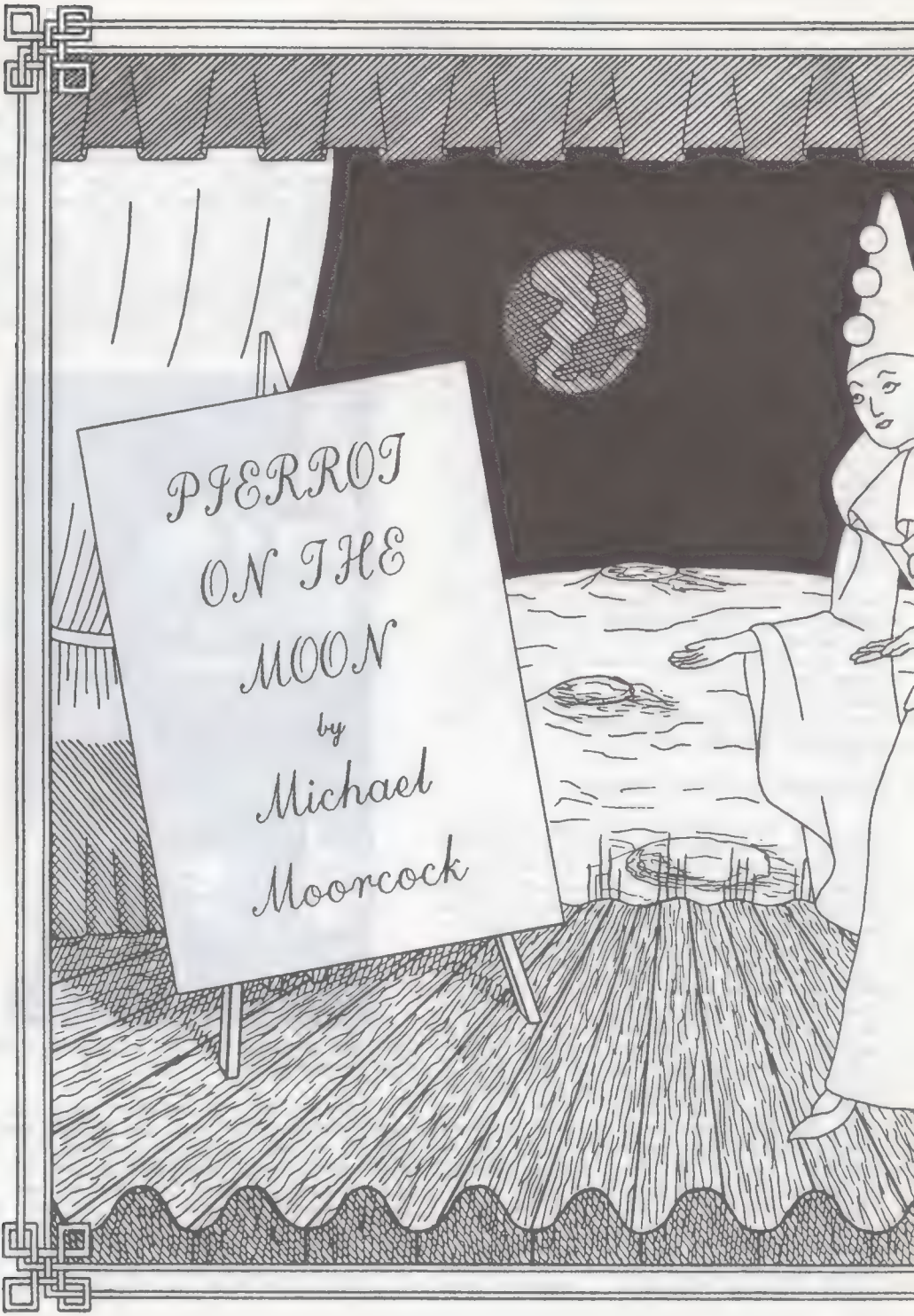
I don't know really, because work and hobbies seem to move very closely together. I collect model soldiers a little bit, I collect ephemera of the 20th century, again for what it tells me about the world I live in as well as the fact that I frequently find it aesthetically attractive. I collect cigarette cards, but I don't collect them in any real sense, I like them and I'll buy a few from time to time but I don't have the sort of collecting obsession, so I don't know whether that counts as a hobby. In fact I don't have many obsessions of that sort. I collect books, but again not obsessively. I've just sold off a whole lot of books which led the Times Diary to phone my agent asking me was I on such hard times I had to sell my 'library'. The fact is I just wanted to get rid of the buggers. So I don't know. I'm looking around my room at the moment to see any sign of hobbies, but not really, I can't think of anything, beyond the fact that I collect old magazines and general popular ephemera I suppose - what I find most interesting. 20th century, late 19th century.

I suppose one hobby I do have is that I collect Pierrot figurines, of which I've got quite a few. We like Art Nouveau stuff as well, we've got a fair amount of that although not as much as I once had. The majority of my best bits of Art Nouveau went with one of my marriages. But this flat is almost wholly Arts and Crafts, Aesthetic Movement and Art Nouveau, down to the fire-places and magazine racks! All done by us. Hand-blocked Morris wallpaper, Eastlake and J.S. Henry furniture ... Very fin-de-siecle! Very poncey. Two old hippys' dream of heaven!



Is there anything else you wish you had more time to devote to?

I'd like to spend a lot more time with my music, a great deal more time with my music, but I'm so damn rusty now Linda, my wife of, what, seven years, heard an old tape of my playing and refused to believe it was me because she said it was far to good for me, which will give you some idea of the state that I'm in now. It wasn't that good then. I haven't picked up a guitar probably in two or three years. I've still done a certain


PIERROT
ON THE
MOON
by
Michael
Moorcock



They didn't tell me
That breathing was so difficult.
I can't say I think
much
Of the scenery
I wish I was back
in my home again
- They've left me behind ...

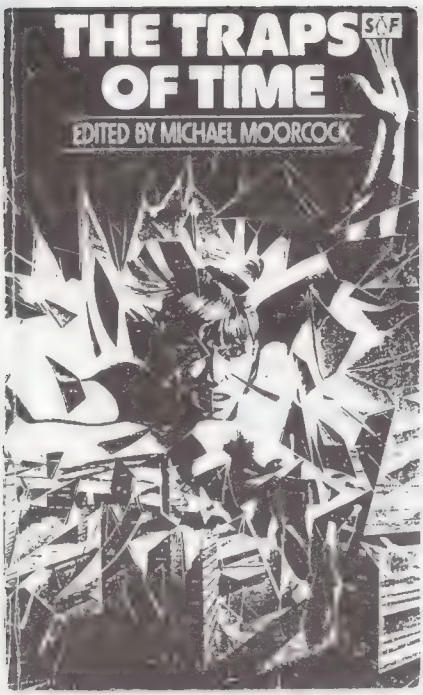
It seemed a good
idea at the time
Just me - Harlequin and
Columbine
- But they slipped off soon
And here I am
Stranded on the bloody
moon ...

Next time things will be
different
And I'll know the score
I'll bring at least an
oxygen tent
And a good deal more
besides
Bacon, eggs and bread
And a telescope ...

And I'll buy returns as well
There's no bloody ticket office
Or a gentleman's lavatory
Or a deck chair to be had
And every time I take a step -
I bounce ...

They said it'd be just like
Brighton beach
Dodgems and roundabouts
Candy floss and sticks of rock
Though not so many crowds
Try and get a donkey ride
That's all I've got to say ...

(c) Michael Moorcock 1986.



amount of music lyrics and that sort of thing but yes, I would like more time for music. I think I'd like more time for everything in a way, I'd like more time for travelling, and my relationships with my children and Linda. I'd like to be able to read a bit more than I do I suppose, read more different things at any rate. I just wish I had more time! I feel resentful I haven't got enough time to do everything I want to do, you know, that I can do, that I'm going to die before I finish! That's what righteously pisses me off!

Are there any books you wish you hadn't published?

Not really. There's books that I'm not that proud of and books that are not that good, but I never have regrets about that. There are some pretty terrible books but what the hell, you know, there's some pretty good ones as well, but it doesn't bother me really. Some of them are fairly dodgey in terms of their morality, MAVIS MING I really don't like at all from that point of view, and quite a few are unsuccessful in fulfilling their intentions. I'm not sure that's true now but it used to be. I can't think of any books that have done any great harm to the world. But who knows?

What do you think of the current political situation in Britain/Europe/the world?

Bloody hell! I don't think much at all. Read my pamphlet THE RETREAT FROM LIBERTY! I think there's been - I'd hate to say 'an inevitable swing' to the right - a return to authoritarianism, nationalism and all that sort of thing. I don't think that necessarily there is an inevitable swing back and forth between liberalism and authoritarianism or whatever you care to call it. But again, when resources are in short supply, when there's a lot of famine, when there's a lot of unemployment, all the rest of it, you always get people falling back on the maxims and bigotries of their grandfathers. The tendency is to retreat, and that's what reactionaryism is all about, it's a retreat into a mythical past, into a sort of golden past which is the theme of every right wing political movement across the world.

I think probably equally dangerous is the myth of a golden future which you get obviously in a lot of messianic, left wing political creeds, such as certain forms of communism. I think it's all dangerous one way an another, but then so's unthinking liberalism. Another reason I wrote THE FINAL ROGRAMME was to make a commentary on that aspect of things. Everybody was saying things had changed but in fact nothing at all had changed. It was obvious that the power people thought they had won could be snatched back at any moment. This of course has now happened. Similarly with the Women's Movement. The Women's Movement has experienced a lot of this lately where the men had as it were 'allowed' them the power and then feeling threatened, feeling that they 'need' it themselves have taken it away again, just like that. So it's a strong argument against democratic means of gaining power, and a strong argument for other means of gaining power, such as by acts of war!

I'm always torn between my own hatred of violence and the sense that sometimes it is the only resort people have. People need to be able to make some sort of threat. If it can be financial then that's fine in a capitalist society. If they threaten people with losing profit that's probably the best you can do. And America of course does have a strong tradition of affecting fairly radical change, as with the Women's Movement which in America is far in advance of ours and I think of anyone else's, simply because there are so many lawyers prepared to bring lawsuits against people in authority, and if those lawsuits start to show people they're going to lose money by being Bad then they begin to decide that maybe they had better be Good. At least until such time as they

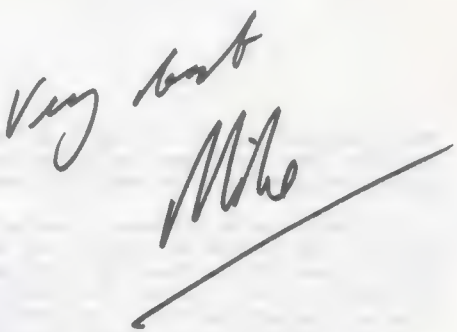


can get away with it again. Of course you've always got that problem.

I would guess that you would want a less vague reply to your question but I actually can't give one, I'm currently bored with party politics as such, and talk of politics is nearly all bullshit, you know. I think if one's going to do anything at all one should be active in politics. My own activities in politics these days are largely concerned with the Women's Movement, my support for the Movement, I put myself at the disposal of the Women's Movement. I campaign against pornography (not for censorship). A just world is a world where women have as much (or more) real power as men. It's reflected in a lot of my published work, such as THE OPIUM GENERAL. I can't any longer I think distinguish politics from art in my own mind, and I've stopped trying.

It means that certain forms of idealistic politics are only practiced where I feel they're going to have some effect. I'm sick of wasting my time talking to people who really don't have any understanding of the moral principles involved and don't care. Many people seem to me to have become extraordinarily greedy and self-serving at the moment, but there again I grew up through the sixties, or rather I grew up politically through the sixties when there wasn't quite so much evidence of that greed and self-serving. My kids accuse me of failing to prepare them for the world. The world of the sixties and early seventies wasn't today's world! I'm not cynical but I don't think I can be particularly idealistic at the moment or optimistic about the state of the world. I think we'll just be lucky if we scrape through by the skins of our teeth without too many people dying, without too much misery and turmoil and torture and violence, without World War Three. It's not much I suppose to hope for but, well, maybe it is a lot to hope for in the present situation.

"SO LET'S HAVE A SMILE
FOR AN OLD ENGINE DRIVER"



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MICHAEL MOORCOCK FAN CLUB. The Guild of Temporal Adventurers (321 Kenilworth, Memphis, Tennessee 38112, USA), advertised in BBR #4 and elsewhere, is currently not responding to correspondence. It is therefore strongly recommended that no subscription money or magazine material be sent to the Guild until further notice.

Illustration credits for pages 10 - 21:- p.10: THE CURSE OF MAN by Moorcock, illustrated by Kaiser Bill, from BBR #1, 1984; THE FALCON, from BBR #4, 1985, and COWBOY LIGHTS OUT, from BBR #6, 1986, both by Moorcock and both illustrated by Matt Brooker. p.11: Flyer for the DODGEM DUDE/STARCRUISER Deep Fix single (Flicknife FLS 200). p.12: THE DEEP FIX by Moorcock as James Colvin, Compact Books, London 1966. p.13: From one of Mike's letterheads. p.16: THE DRAGON IN THE SWORD by Moorcock, from a press release. p.17: THE DISTANT SUNS by Moorcock and Philip James (James Cawthorn), Unicorn, Cardiff 1975, ISBN 0-85659-021-5; cover art by James Cawthorn. p.18 LES TERRES CREUSES (THE HOLLOW LANDS) by Moorcock, Éditions Denoël, Paris 1977. p.19: THE GREAT ROCK'N'ROLL SWINDLE by Moorcock, Virgin, London 1980, ISBN 0-907080-13-8; cover art by Russell Mills. p.20: THE TRAPS OF TIME edited by Moorcock, Penguin 1979, ISBN 0-14-002868-4; cover art by Adrian Chesterman. p.21: Mike's airship letter seal, from the back of an envelope.

THE SECOND GIBRALTAR

CHRIS REED

There was nothing left for him to do now. He got back into the E-Type and headed for the coast. He hoped the ferry was still running.

But London was no different from Belfast, derelict and gutted as though post earthquake, bones picked clean by vultures. He accelerated down the Mall to Buckingham Palace, bouncing over debris and potholes.

It was just the same there. Through the old iron gates he could see the famous facade had crumbled away to reveal the rooms behind. Decay had paid no favours to heritage. He left the engine running and picked his way over to the gates. They pushed open and he ambled across the forecourt where crows changed the guard to an audience of one. The front door was locked. He shrugged and went back to the car.

Five minutes later he was in Trafalgar Square. Lord Nelson had long since toppled to shatter his marble innards on the fountains where more crows picked at human bones. He chuckled aloud at the thought that though so much had changed people were still feeding the birds in the Square.

It started to rain, great gobbets like birdshit that sheeted down in curtains across the stage. Was this the interval or was the performance now over? Feeling down and out of whiskey he turned up the taper and meandered through the deserted streets. The wrecked buildings were like old friends now passed away, returned to dust and ashes but lacking a decent burial. He felt too impotent to help and cursed himself for gloating, but continued to wallow in his mood while it lasted.

With a sigh of relief he saw that by some miracle Marble Arch was still intact. There was hope yet.

He found the first signs of human habitation in Hyde Park. In the middle of the lawns like a wild west wagon train was an assortment of US Army trucks, jeeps and half tracks. He turned the E-Type on to the grass towards them, carving another set of ruts in the turf, then sped into the centre of the circle to spin the car to a flamboyant halt that mocked modern warfare techniques.

A soldier appeared and sauntered over, oblivious to the rain. Without saying a word he led him through the mud to a caravan trailer, and ushered him up the steps and inside. The makeshift office was filled with the noise of the rain on the roof and the damp stench of clothes drying by the gas heater. There was an American flag in the corner, half hidden by a clutter of boxes and papers; the officer behind the desk wore a Major's insignia. The newcomer recognised him immediately.

"Hello Frank."

"Hello Jerry. I was wondering when you were going to turn up."

"I was just taking a last look round, thought I'd pop in and say hello and goodbye. Didn't expect to bump into you though." He sat down unbidden on the edge of the desk and dangled a leg in the air. "What's the set-up, Frank? You don't usually work with the Yanks so what's in it for you?"

Frank shifted in his chair and stared at the desk top. He looked tired, very tired.

"Oh, manpower, resources ..." he replied after a moment.

"Round here? This place is fucked. You're just clearing up the pieces. Scavenging's not your scene."

"Yeah, but you never know what you might find."

"What? Or who?"

Frank looked up sharply. "Alright Jerry I'll come clean with you -"

"That makes a change -"

"For fuck's sake Jerry! It's in both our interests ... I'm looking for Cath."

"Well I haven't got her if that's what you're asking."

"Exactly. I saw Beesley and he said Miss Brunner's around. Una's been flitting in and out as well."

"That's hardly surprising. A place like this is like rotten meat for flies like them. What's it got to do with Cathy?"

"I don't know. I'm just sure they're hatching something."

"What for? Why should they want to turn against you after all these years?"

"Not me Jerry - Cath."

"Come on Frank. She's not our kid sister any more. She knows how to look after herself."

"I don't think so. Not against them. She may not be a little girl but she's still our sister. What would mother have said if we'd let her into trouble, eh?"

Jerry dreaded to think. The mere thought of his mother was too much, especially now. "Are you suggesting we join forces? You and me?"

"We've got to Jerry. It's family."

"No Frank. You're wasting your time. I'll go my separate way."

"Where's that?"

"I don't know. South, probably, with all the rest."

"You'll regret it, Jerry."

"Maybe. We'll see, eh? It's okay, I'll see myself out."

Outside the rain had slowed to a drizzle but the mud was over his ankles. He slopped back to the E-Type and started up, but the car just sank deeper into the ground. He wound down the window and called to the corporal on guard.

"Hey soldier! Can you give us a tow?"

He parked outside his west London flat and let himself in by the front door. He was only stopping by on the off chance that Catherine might have turned up, though this would have been the first place Frank had checked.

Inside, everything was as he'd left it, as if he'd only been gone for the day instead of for weeks. This side of the city had not been as badly hit as the rest and the building was almost intact. As expected the electricity was off.

Cathy wasn't there. He went to the drinks cabinet and poured some whiskey, downed it and refilled the glass. Rummaging in his bedroom he found his old tape machine and a few cassettes. He chose one at random and turned on the taper.

It was way past dusk when, sitting in the dark, the batteries in the tape recorder long dead, he decided to go to bed.

He woke up and killed the alarm clock. He couldn't remember setting it. He went back to sleep.

When he woke up again much later the sun was streaming on to the bed, half blinding him. It was pointless trying to get back to sleep, so he went to the bathroom for a shower. There was no hot water but he stepped under the icy jet regardless, exhilarated by the new day's potential. Over the sound of the water he thought he heard someone in the next room, but he gave the matter no further thought.

He towelled himself down vigorously and went back to the bedroom. Miss Brunner was lying in the four-poster, a feline smile on the painted symmetry of her lips.

"Hello," said Jerry.

"Hello," purred Miss Brunner.

"It's been a long time," said Jerry, sitting down on the bed.

"It most certainly has," replied Miss Brunner, pulling the sheets up to her chin.

Jerry decided to go back to bed after all.

"So how was Belfast?"

"Much the same."

"London, Glasgow, Paris, Bonn - they all got it."

"Shame about the Eiffel Tower."

"These things happen. Good bloody riddance I say."

"We were lucky to get across to France, you know."

"Why's that?"

"The Americans had everything sealed off to mop up. I thought they'd have stopped us getting out of Britain."

"They wouldn't do that - it's bad for

their image ... Besides, Frank probably feels better with us out of the way."

"Your brother? What's he got to do with it?"

"I bumped into him in Hyde Park. He's made himself a Major in the US Army."

"Hardly his style."

"That's what I said. Claimed he needed the back-up."

"What for?"

"Said he was looking for Cath."

"That's bullshit for a start. She went out with the first wave, probably living it up in the south of France by now if I know her."

"Wouldn't surprise me. He's obviously planning something. He mentioned something about Beesley being around ..."

"If those two are involved perhaps we're better off out of the way ..."

"At least with leaving it so late the roads have had a chance to clear."

It was true. The autoroute was empty and Jerry kept his foot to the floor, only slowing to pass through the occasional burnt out toll station. It was a glorious day and the air whipped through the open windows. They skirted Lyon and followed the Rhône south, flanked by untended vine terraces. They both wore shades.

"We'll hit the refugees when we reach the Med though."

"'Ere, Manwell! Gerrus anuvver o' them Cooby Leebries will ya?"

The raucous voice resounded round the open-air beach bar and people looked up to stare, while those already familiar with the coarse English woman simply tut-tutted in despair.

Mrs. Cornelius nudged the young couple under the neighbouring umbrella. "Duntcha fink 'e looks just like that waiter on the telly?"

"Actually, I believe he comes from Sheffield," the timid husband ventured.

"These Spanish waiters all look the same to me," she chortled on. "Randy little buggers too, tell that by their tight little bums ..."

The waiter tried to deliver her drink unobtrusively but Mrs. C. was too quick for him. She forced him to sit on the vastness of her lap, her chuckle like a minor earthquake beneath him.

"Ker ker ker ... owd'ja fancy takin' me back to me room an' makin' an old lady 'appy for a while, ker ker ker ..."

The waiter, half smothered in her voluminous bosom, said something muffled and undecipherable in reply.

"Ker ker ker ... perhaps we can sort aht me bill at the same time, like we do wiv the milkman, ker ker ker ..."

Tapping on unknown reserves and no doubt invoking some major deity known only to himself, the hapless waiter somehow managed to escape from the bear-like hug and flee for safety behind the bar.

Still chortling happily to herself Mrs. Cornelius took a long slurp of her Bacardi & Coke, adjusted the knotted handkerchief on her head, then settled herself more comfortably in her chair, the metal legs sinking dangerously into the sand. "This is the life, eh?" she announced, terrorising the surrounding tables again. "Just like Margit innit, only more sun."

She looked down the beach from under her umbrella. The golden sand was packed with sunsoakers, and down in the wavelets kids splashed and played ball. A couple of topless pretty girls jiggled merrily past right in front of her, and she gave them an approving eye. "Pity Catherine an' the boys ain't 'ere," she thought, "they ain't 'ad an holiday for ages ..."

Mrs. Cornelius gulped back the last of her drink and slammed the empty glass down on the table.

"Manwell ..!!"

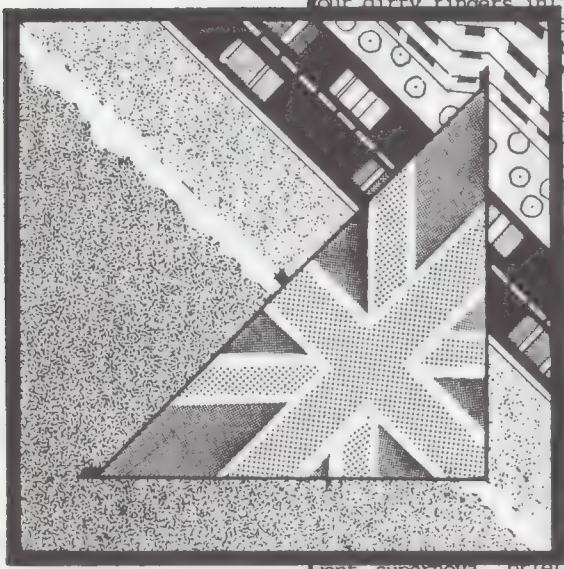
Bishop Beesley surveyed the view from his pulpit, corpulent belly against the rail and fat hands upon the lectern. A mass of faces watched him silently, waiting for him to speak. When he did the old stone cathedral echoed with his voice, reverberating off the ornate gold altarwork, chiming up into the bell-tower and filling the sanctuary with a divine wrath that galvanised the congregation. The Bishop found it strange to return to the domain of the cloth after so long, but his task transcended metaphysical mores and he warmed to it with relish.

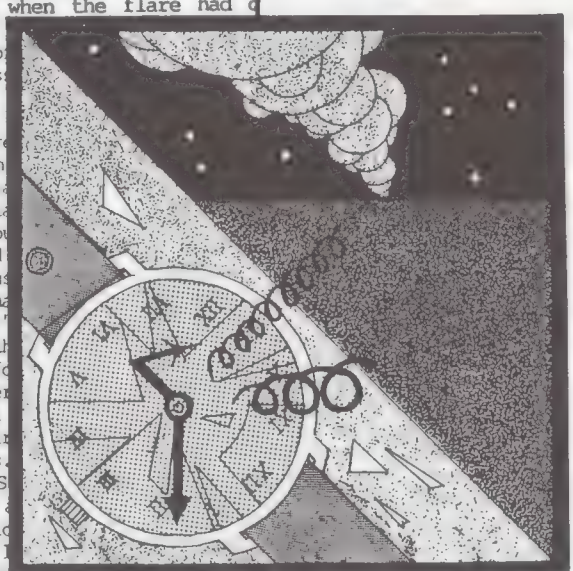
"Do you not remember," he was saying, "how the Moors swept north from Africa to take over your lands for seven hundred years?" There was a murmur from the pews.

"And do you not remember how, under Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Kings, your great-grandfathers reconquered your country, drove the infidel from your towns and back into the sea, returning this land to Christian righteousness and God, its one and only ruler?"

This time there were cries of agreement and olé and some people had risen to their feet. Bishop Beesley stared each and every one of his flock squarely in the eye.

"Do you not see that this has happened again? Now from the north the English and Germans, that Protestant rabble, are stealing Spain from under your feet and you sit





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"But you must admit, my d

here and let them! Are you so weak as to let your forefathers' honour go unavenged?"

The congregation stood as one to scream their denial and he had to shout to be heard.

"Do you want to let Benidorm become a second Gibraltar? No? Then rise up against these invaders! Arm yourselves with pitch-forks and scythes! Reconquer your lands! Drive out the infidel! Viva España! Viva la Reconquista!"

The enraged natives took up the refrain and chanting that chorus they surged like a rip tide for the main doors. His job done the Bishop watched them go, the serene smile of a benign padre creasing his podgey jowels. Then he squeezed himself down from the pulpit, slipped into a side room and stripped off his ceremonial finery, hanging it back on the peg where he'd found it half an hour earlier. He produced a much needed Mars bar from a pocket and chewing happily tipped a wink to the priest bound and gagged in the corner.

He stepped out into the sunlight. Not far away he heard the voice of the mob and caught the tang of smoke in his nostrils. Feeling pleased with his day's work he climbed into his car and drove off.

From down on the ground the microlight sounded like an irate mosquito, hovering in plain view but just out of reach.

Many found it just as irritating. The triangular wings were a big Union Jack and the pilot, impudently swigging from a hip flask, made low passes over the beach and apartment blocks to attract people's attention. They craned their necks back and watched, muttering Gallic obscenities and hoping the mad Tommy would crash into a building and kill himself.

Then, with a cheeky dip of his wingtips, the pilot revved the engine up an octave and climbed steeply into the sky, leaving the French resort cursing and bemused.

The microlight headed further up the coast to the German resort. Here more care was needed. The pilot risked buzzing the main square, with a cheery wave to the stunned ranks of stormtroopers practising drill in the sun. Some shots were hurriedly fired, but his speed and the breeze sent the bullets off target. Nonetheless he climbed to a safe height to circle the subdued and orderly town, before heading out to sea over a beach festooned with barbed wire like a Normandy beach-head. Skimming the calm water he turned back south for home.

Jerry was the first to reach the beach. Following his lead the rest of the team pulled their sailboards out of the water and peeled off their wetsuits. Darkly clad and with blacked-out sails there was no way they could have been seen from the shore against the night sky. They stowed their equipment and stripped down to the baggy shorts and Bahama shirts worn under the wetsuits.

Weapons at the ready the Englishmen stole up the beach and on to the prom of the French resort, splitting into twos and threes to mingle with the volume of people they found there. Jerry let his men move ahead, sure they'd manage without him; thanks to his earlier reconnaissance he'd briefed them well. They disappeared up the avenue of gaudy piano bars and glistening trinket shops, while Jerry slipped off down a side street, feeling more comfortable out of the glare. He had business of his own to attend to. In the distance came the muffled crump of explosions and the death-watch beetle rattle of gunfire. He smiled softly to himself. Everything was going to plan.

Jerry lay back on the sheets and whimpered. At the end of the bed the combined efforts of Cathy's hands and mouth were driving him crazy and he knew he couldn't hold out much longer. He tensed and quivered and relaxed in an ever faster cycle and sweat poured from his body. Any second now. Yes, any second now!

Suddenly the door crashed open and a squad of German stormtroopers burst into the room. Submachine guns at the ready they formed a cordon round the bed.

Cathy sat up and screamed.

Jerry moaned in frustration.

Two officers swaggered to the fore; Jerry knew the two women at once and moaned again. He flopped back on the bed and waited for something to happen.

"So, zer Herr Cornelius mit zer trousers down," remarked Miss Brunner. She would have looked rather fetching in crisp black SS Oberleutnant uniform with cap tilted rakishly to one side, but for the Luger comfortable in her right hand.

"I was wondering where you'd disappeared to," commented Jerry in reply. "Might have known you'd flit here and there as the fancy took you." He leaned up on his elbows. "How's the hitchhiking coming along?"

"Banter won't improve your situation, Jerry," cut in Una Persson. She wore the same outfit as Miss Brunner, and they looked so alike they might have been twins. Una had her Luger in her left hand. "As you can see, you are hopelessly outnumbered - escape is impossible."

"Furthermore," added Miss Brunner, "we have the whole town under our control. It

really was most helpful to find your men had already taken out the main points of resistance. Saved us a lot of trouble."

"And quite a feather in our cap to have you in our hands as well ..."

Catherine was already starting to dress. The stormtroopers could hardly contain their disappointment.

The day was already well advanced, another Spanish scorcher to judge by the glare outside. Jerry lay quiet for a moment till he realised where he was, but when he moved to get up he was caught short with a wince, his arse suddenly on fire as if sprayed inside with Ralgex. He explored it gingerly with his fingers then eased himself gently off the bed. Una always had been a sadistic bugger with a dildo, he reflected ruefully, almost fondly. Evidently Miss Brunner had taught her some new tricks as well. Luckily for him it hadn't been the stormtroopers.

"Cath?"

The apartment was empty.

There was a clatter of small-arms fire so he walked carefully, bandy-legged, to the window and peered out. Evidently there were still some pockets of French or English resistance to the German forces: not far away a detachment of stormtroopers was laying siege to a 5-star hotel and hamburger joint, without much obvious success. It was time to make use of the disruption to aid his escape.

Prudence decreed he put on some clothes before going outside, liberal though the French were about such things. All he could find was a pair of woman's knickers, but he squeezed them on nonetheless; at least they'd pass for swimming trunks in an emergency.

He tried the door cautiously and it opened to his touch, the German guard in the corridor blissfully unaware. Jerry crept up behind him and tapped him on the shoulder, knocking him out as he turned round with a straightforward punch to the jaw. An ugly old-fashioned way of resolving an awkward situation, but there was no alternative. Minutes later a figure in Wehrmacht battle-dress emerged from the building and made off down the street, trying hard to remain inconspicuous but moving awkwardly with discomfort as though he'd just shat himself.

Far away on the edge of hearing was a deep rumbling sound like half heard thunder. It grew rapidly louder, now resembling a ground trembling stampede of wildebeast. There was a sudden frenzy as officers tried frantically to organise their men, but the rising cacophony, now clearly a horde of clamouring voices, increased agitation and turned attempted order to confusion. Then all hell broke loose.

The mob fell on the town like a tropical tidal wave, a seething flood of provincial folk wielding whatever was at hand, butchers their cleavers, farmworkers their hoes and rakes, housewives their finest steel carving knives. Their voice was an angry volcano, spitting forth molten rage and curses.

"Abajo el infiel! Viva la patria! Viva la Reconquista!"

For once the Germans' discipline failed them and they stood bemused at the sight of such strange-looking folk, the likes of whom they'd never dreamed existed in this land of beach and sun. When they finally came to their senses and raised their guns their retaliation was unconcerted and the natives hacked them down with glee. Unfortunately they also hacked down a good many of their own number in their eagerness to drive out the invaders. They swarmed on relentless through the streets.

Further into the resort the defenses were more organised and the barricades were manned by English and Germans alike, their earlier antagonism forgotten. They soon reached stalemate, the Latins' weight of numbers finely balanced by the Teutons' training and firearms. The French, caught between the two cultures and once more reluctant hosts to conflict, looked as usual to their own interests and were nowhere to be seen, gone to ground until the fighting passed.

Perched in one of the watch-points on the barricade Jerry, still sporting the German guard's uniform and walking more comfortably now, thought he saw a fat cleric observing from behind the Spanish lines, but it was too far to be certain. He stripped off his tunic and his shirt and made himself comfortable in the sun.

Later that afternoon the air was once more shattered with noise, this time instantly recognizable. A dozen US transport helicopters appeared from behind the concrete skyline to hover over no-man's-land whilst their cargoes of marines absailed down to earth. The Chinooks went away again and the Americans set up their equipment in the portal of a swish hotel. Then the young officer in command came forward with a megaphone and addressed the two camps.

"Hi guys! We thought we'd just drop in and see if we could help you sort out your little problem peacefully, y'know? So if your two commanding officers'd care to come forward we'll -"

A shot rang out from the barricade and the American dropped dead in mid sentence. "Fuck

off Yanks! This is one pie you won't stick your dirty fingers in!"

A fusillade followed and marines toppled like nine pins, while the rest ran for cover in the hotel foyer. On the other side the Spaniards were firing their captured rifles and pelting the Americans with stones. There were shouts of "Yanquis a la mierda! Toma por culo, yanqui!" and the multitude surged forward. The Teutons deserted their barricade and rushed to join them, and inside the hotel a petrified NCO radioed for reinforcements.

Feeling pleased with his marksmanship, Jerry clambered down from the watchpoint and headed for the beach.

There was an excellent view of the coast from the deck of the "Teddy Bear". It was a warm calm night and the boat rocked gently on the slight swell; they lounged in deckchairs sipping G & T.

As they watched, a flight of US combat choppers swooped low over the resort, their guns sounding faint across the water. One of the choppers was caught by groundfire and went supernova, briefly illuminating that part of the town as the wreckage sprayed down.

"The Euros seem to have got their act together quite well," remarked Frank Cornelius when the flare had died out. He had only just arrived and was still in American uniform.

Miss Brunner gave a derisive sneer. "But when they've seen off the Yanks they'll go back to their regional squabbles just like before."

"What they need," said Frank, "is a messiah, a fanatic who'll inspire them and maintain their unity."

"You mean someone like Reagan?" Catherine asked brightly, and Miss Brunner snorted in disgust.

"That's what was so easy with the Germans," said Una. "They had the discipline and the mass identity, and were simply waiting for someone to give the orders."

"Terribly easy to exploit though."

Una ignored the comment and carried on, inspired by the gin and her recent achievements. "Once we got moving the Dutch and the Scandinavians didn't stand a chance, same as the French. We were the only ones who looked to the future, all the rest were just living for the moment, having a holiday in the sun. Just look at the Brits, up all night drinking beer and all day on the beach sleeping it off."

"But you must admit, my dear, you met your match in rabble rousing," said Bishop Beesley quietly, pausing from the peanut bowl where his attention had so far been concentrated.

Frank nodded in agreement. "Just as well really. You can have too much of a good thing."

"Trust the Swiss to have taken over Andorra."

"What makes them so sure one mountain refuge is any better than another?"

"I hear there's some new little states down on the Adriatic, might be worth a look-see ..."

The discussion progressed, more animated and disjointed as they ran out of gin and started on the vodka.

Jerry leaned on the desk rail and said nothing. The day's elation had long dissolved to leave a sour ache deep in his gut; he tipped his drink over the side and dropped the glass into the water after it. He was sick of it. The endless cycle of destruction ... London, home, childhood, he'd willingly danced on that grave. There was no going back now, nothing to go back for.

Cathy was all he had left now. He tried to attract her attention, but she was too engrossed with Una. Before long the two women went below to find a cabin, though their giggles and squeals were still quite audible on deck.

Jerry shrugged. He'd hoped Catherine would have come with him but it was getting late, he couldn't afford to wait any longer. He went to the stern and swung out the "Teddy Bear"'s lifeboat, climbed in and lowered himself into the water. He pushed off and started rowing for land, aiming for part of the beach well away from the fighting. He'd had enough of fighting.

When he reached the shore he hopped out of the little boat and stood looking out to sea. He glanced at his watch, saw the second hand striding purposefully round to the top of the dial. Not long now.

Then a sudden vision of Cathy rose unbidden in his mind, and he remembered the feel of her skin, the touch of her fingers, her lips. There was no-one like Cathy ...

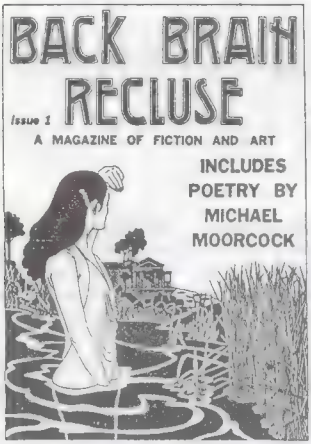
He tore off his watch, ground it under his heel madly, desperately. But time stops for no man and the quick flash boom came nevertheless. So much destruction ... fighting fire with fire ... had to be ... had to be stopped.

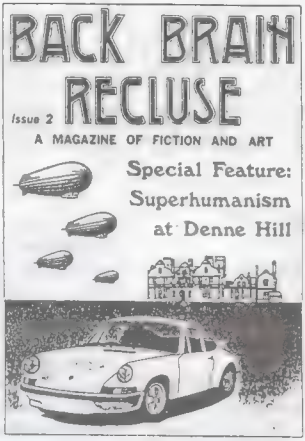
Jerry walked off along the sand, leaving the wreck of the "Teddy Bear" guttering behind him. He allowed himself one small comfort.

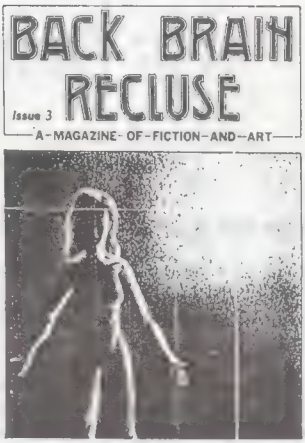
He still had his mother.

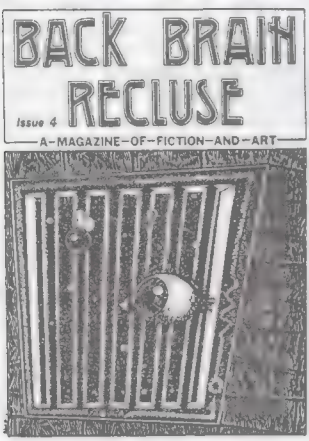
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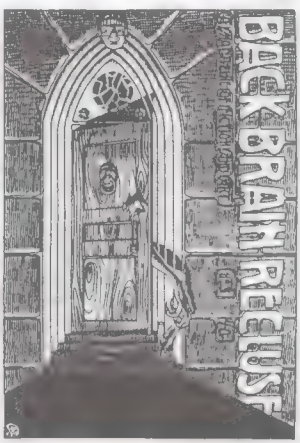
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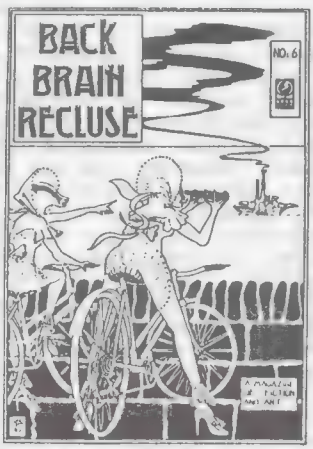












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THE GREAT COUNTERFEIT MEMORY SIN-DROME

THE FINAL JERRY CORNELIUS STORY, EVER

STORM THE FUTURE IS GATHERING NOW

PERFECT PORNO BLACKNESS, HEAT DEATH, VIDEO LACERATIONS, TOXIC VIOLENCE, CORROSIVE INFANTS QUIVER, LETHAL TULIP OVERKILL, CIRCULAR ERROR PROBABILITY.

In his head Cornelius was hearing Europe scream. Reflexively he hunched down, crouched on dew damp grass, moisture infiltrating tartan-pattern carpet slippers. Crows burn slow motion, ebbing traceries through and around the peaks of black leafless trees, leaving wakes of displaced air. The trees vignette off, unfinished, dissolving in autumn mist at the edge of visibility. His hand splayed on soft humous soil, quinpedal. Real coldness seeping at fingertips, index finger indenting into the dirt up to the first knuckle, then will go no further. The sky ripples, seemingly on the brink of breakdown. The nail of his finger reaching a layer of hard alloy beneath the lawn turfing.

He stands up slowly. The sun occluded and descending somewhere beyond the trees, smearing clouds with crushed ochre. Beneath the metal - nothing. Beyond the trees - nothing.

Behind Cornelius a man approaches with a jerky ungainly gait. He is recognised as C.T. Talp, the orderly. Middle-aged, running to fat, dressed in an off-white smock with embroidered initials over the left breast (T.C.T.). Cornelius turns, detecting the sound of laboured breathing, the brush of patent leather on moist grass. The orderly is overweight, physically unfit, vulnerable. Cornelius selects pressure points, potential targets that would render him unconscious, others that would bring death. He has the element of surprise. A sudden lunge now and he can escape, beyond those trees, into ... what? Escape from ... what?

Talp is annoyed, his shambling uncoordinated lope gracelessly ceasing. His heavy inhalation clearly audible. He spits inexpertly in the direction of drab flowerbeds, dying daffodils and undisciplined roses. "What you doing here? You know you're not allowed ..."

Possible answers flare up, but instead he merely shrugs. "No reason." A surprisingly mild reaction. He begins examining this unaccustomed timidity, hunting motivation. Avoiding confrontation? Tactical deviance?

The man relaxes as he regains breath, cheeks discolouring in mottled webs of ruptured veins. A reflection of the trees black against the sky. "You're wanted." The jerk of a stubby thumb over the shoulder in the direction of the main building. The house. The Sanatorium.

Jerry's eyes follow the gesture, then they wander. "What's beyond those trees?"

Talp sniffs and looks pensive, an expression to which he's unaccustomed. "The electrified fence I guess. Why do you ask?"

"No reason." He went to put his hands deep in the dressing gown pockets, recalled the soil trapped up beneath the nail of his index finger, and thought better of it. Hands clasped loosely behind him he began to walk in the indicated direction. Talp wipes his nose with the back of his well-fleshed paw, leaving a snail-trail, and falls into step. Dampness clung to the skin, wetness staining the air with rich smells of lush decay, juicy drifts of dead russet leaves and rain-soaked earth. They quit the lawn to walk the gravel driveway, crunching between illkempt flower borders that shepherded them precisely towards the house.

Jerry's mind numbed over in pleasing melancholy. Wild-eyed men might storm the streets of Europe while the Establishment burns, but this is England, slow, unchanging. Rigid structures of class, of morality, of pace, of propriety. This would not change. He recalls other words he'd used to

Andrew Darlington

describe this state of changelessness - stagnancy, complacency, death. It's not clear to him how the new perspective had come about.

SURROGATE SEXUAL SAVAGERY

They roll the dice, squatting on the floor. Watch the black cubes dance across the enclosed space made by their legs.

"A three and a four - seven."

He glanced up at the victim, the prize, while his companion picked up the dice. Shook them eagerly. Muttered some form of incantation. Then released the dice.

"A two and a five - seven."

The captive moaned. Shuffles his legs across the rumpled vinyl, shifting the weight of hours. The slender gold chains securing his wrists to the aluminium grille chafe uncomfortably as minutes elongate. Shimmers of sweat stand out on patches of wispy body hair.

He threw again. "A three and a five - eight."

His companion. "A four and a four - eight."

"Shall we ...?" said the gambler. His fingers run the length of the inlaid razor-edged blade at his waist.

A hesitation. A licking of dry lips. "We should do it correctly."

"Guess you're right." Silence. "Your throw."

WRIT LARGE IN THE ANNALS OF KARMA

On the screen a cloak of mist veiled frozen trees, coiling like a living thing. It moved in folds, in eddies, swirling round the stumps of great dead trunks. Its tenuous upper layers weaving strands of silver hair through defoliated branches. Dead trees became ethereal, ghosts, trunks blistered with dew and eclipsed into patterns by shifting shadows. Cornelius knew it was merely part of the cycle. He pulled his dressing gown about his throat as the cold intensified. The ground was ashen. Occasional shrivelled yellow grass fought for survival, eked out of the acid shingle that had killed the trees, turning them into petrified monuments of stone. The ground hard with the pallour of death, frost forming mandalas across its irregular dunes.

Cornelius could visualise the concept but didn't know how or why he knew. Could picture the two worlds (Earth and Moon?) hanging alone in space, far from the warmth of any sun. The light of feeble stars mocking three artificial suns chasing each other round the equator of the larger world. For fifteen hours the suns took it in turn to irradiate the land masses skirting the Purple Ocean, the Sighing Sea and the many tiny islands. The light raising the total darkness to a barely tolerable twilight. Then they set, the suns pursuing their eccentric orbits behind the world, over the glaciers that were miles thick, covering most of the planet's surface. For ten hours there was total darkness but for the stars, before the first sun rose again. All this Cornelius could see, he could even understand part of it. The fact that the suns had now set accounted for the darkness, the cold, the frost. The changing temperature accounted for the mist. It was part of the cycle.

He cursed the dull aching in his mind. Climbed a shingle slope towards its crest. Ms. Persson, the woman who'd followed him from the Sanatorium, over the dead guard and the electrified fence, and into the waste beyond, shuffled behind him reluctantly. The mist washed at them, beading hair with perfect gems. Above them, all around them towered the petrified forest, dark shapes forbidding against perfect porno blackness. The crows long since gone.

THE STARS THAT PLAY WITH LAUGHING SAM'S DICE

JAZZ NARCOTIC, PORNOGRAPHIC VIOLENCE, PERMISSIBLE AMBIGUITY, AMYL NITRATE CATASTROPHE, NIPPLE PIERCING, ULTRA-VIOLET NAKED, DADA DRUGS, SNUFF VIDEOS

There were four worn sandstone steps leading to recently implanted glass swing doors set into the stately terracotta facade of the house, the main building. There was a bleak linoleum hall beyond. The walls had once been heavy with embossed wallpaper, floral baroque still discernible beneath the whitewash, and ornate corniced affectations around the ceiling edges indicated a degree of antique grandeur.

Talp moved across to the reception window, shoes singing on the polish, and spoke in low tones to Ms. Persson.

Cornelius let his mind drift. No time had elapsed. He had not gone beyond the border wire, had not killed the perimeter guard, there was no petrified forest, he had not been fellated by Ms. Persson. There was only now and he was standing in the hall. To his right, plate glass panels allowed surveillance of the canteen; snatches of it intermittently visible, strobe-fashion, as he walked. It seemed near-deserted, regiments

of vinyl-topped tables and tubular chairs receding to the counter, a Berlin Wall of shrink-wrapped sandwiches, buns and stale tarts, and steamy silver piping beaded with condensation behind which lurked two portly ladies of indeterminate age with hair scrupulously swept beneath mop-caps, and eyes glazed with gold-rimmed spectacles. Cornelius noted one man sitting alone in a corner studying a half-consumed cup of coffee across which skin was already leprously rippling. The man had shoulder length pure white hair and - could he be mistaken? - albino eyes? A second man sat a discreet distance away. He seemed to have been subjected to brain surgery, his forehead thickly masked with bandages.

There was a third figure darkly shadowed yet ghosted insubstantial. With a shock of recognition Cornelius recognised his reflection superimposed in the glass. He was unhealthily corpulent, a ragged beard and black knotted hair loose to his shoulder. He also gained the impression of a battered hat, creased brim pulled low, but decided it was a trick of light as he was bare headed.

Talp returned smiling and led Cornelius through a set of Fire doors wedged open, and up a flight of stairs fenced by bannisters that smelt strongly of varnish. They halted outside the second door leading off the landing. Talp put finger to lips conspiratorially, then pressed his ear to the woodgrain panelling. His expression oscillated grotesquely between childish delight at indiscretion, and a patronising leer at Jerry meant to draw him into the prank. A burlesque wink sealing the intimacy. For whose benefit? Cornelius felt uneasily that the play acting was intended for him.

Talp slipped back into gear. Straightened. Knocked sharply on the door twice, waited a calculated five seconds, then swung the door open. "Mr. Cornelius to see you Doctor Langdon."

THE LIGHT POURS OUT OF ME

"Two and four - six."

"One and five - six."

There was no rust on the sub-machine gun. Just gleaming precision-turned steel growing from the perimeter guard's casually crooked arm. The conspicuous lack of deterioration should have made him suspect. But the threat of the stance was deceptive. The combination of gun and man was finely and accurately set. The immediacy of the total situation served to relegate the importance of its component parts.

Yet if he moved fast the guard could be overpowered, the fence electrification isolated .. If he moved fast he could still escape ...

THE GREAT BANANA HOAX

"Are you average?" said the man opposite him suddenly.

Cornelius was taken off guard. "Of course I'm average," he retorted.

"For your consumer group, yes."

The initial bewilderment replaced by indignation. "But that's nothing to do with you." Perhaps this insistent stranger knew about the escape? Perhaps he hadn't allowed sufficient time for re-integration into the bleak austere society beyond the wire? The society he'd forgotten so much about.

"According to your standards, the "average" to which I conform is of a lower consumer echelon than your own."

"That, I feel, is self evident."

"So it gives you pride to feel your average standards are higher than my average standards. So all over the city different groups of people walk about proud that they're average - but that their average is better than someone else's average?"

Jerry's head swam with baffling concepts. "The natural order of genetic potential ..." he began, but the sentence hung in air unfinished. "The necessary social stratification dictates that there be those above, and those below," he announced triumphantly.

"Who are all average?"

"To their indigenous groups." The remark was not as solid as he had intended it to be.

DON'T KNOW WHAT I WANT BUT I KNOW HOW TO GET IT, I WANNA DESTROY PASSERS-BY

HERMAPHRODITE ENTROPY TANGLE, METAL NEURAL SYNTHESIS, VISCERAL MANOEUVRES, CATATONIC ABSTRACT MUTILATION, MANDRAX TIME-WARP NECROMANCER, GUERILLA ATRITION.

Jerry moved meekly as indicated into the claustrophobically cluttered room beyond. A cornucopia of vintage luxury, well-fleshed leather upholstery, potted ferns, marquetry and inlaid furniture, assorted Victoriana, a Miro print. Light angled through leaded windows to fall in diamond reticulations across a broad paper-strewn desk littered with photographs, manuals, and unopened files.

"Come in Mr. ... er ... Cornelius. Take a seat." Doctor Langdon was well dressed with

a polite if forceful manner. One used to respect and obedience. Balding, tonsure of hair meticulously arranged around the polished pate. Thick black-rimmed spectacles squarely positioned on vaguely semitic nose. Face round as the moon and professionally smiling. "Thought we could talk for a while Mr. .. er ... Cornelius."

Jerry sat before the desk, the chair covering breathing as he sank his not-inconsiderable weight into it.

The man turned to a file cabinet behind him, opened a draw labelled "LOK-MOR", withdrew a bulky manilla folder and began leafing through it nonchalantly. "Do you read, Mr. Cornelius? What authors do you prefer?"

Jerry shrugged. "Mervyn Peake. William Burroughs. Fritz Leiber's "Grey Mouser" books ..."

Again the smile. "I wonder, have you read this one?" He passed a slim paperback across the desk. Cornelius picked it up, weighed it experimentally. The title was "Breakfast in the Ruins". The author Michael Moorcock. "Look inside. The title page. Perhaps it'll jog your memory."

He leafed disinterestedly. A line of print coming out at him - "Michael Moorcock died of lung cancer, aged 31, in Birmingham last year" - then it was gone and he'd riffled to



the end of the book. "Sorry. Means nothing to me." He replaced it centrally on the desk, thrusting it back across the intuitive personal-territory divide.

"What do you think happens to fictitious characters when the author dies?" mused the Doctor. "Do they also die at the moment of their creator's death? Do they still exist, but without fluidity, without the possibility of change or development, trapped into ever-decreasing repetitions without escape? Or do they survive their progenitor's death only to become subject to alarmingly accelerated laws of entropy - lacking infusions of new energy until they begin to ebb away by degrees, becoming less and less substantial, more chimerical, until they just cease to exist ...? I wonder."

HER PHOBIA IS INFECTION, SHE NEEDS ONE TO SURVIVE

At the age of 31 Jerry Cornelius began deliberately to unlearn. Forgot how to write. Scrawled childishly as they attempted to reach him.

In his head Cornelius was hearing Europe scream.

"It seems," said Bastable, the stranger, with educated nonchalance, "that Bakunin's prophesies were correct, merely premature." His words were rhythmically punctuated by commas of random gunfire and exclamation marks of Militia sirens. Opposite the deceptive calm of the window a Cathedral burned. Flames like praying hands striving into the night like lurid symbols. While beyond it, the burning city of Capitalopolis was dawn six hours too soon.

THE NEWS FOR TODAY IS THE MOVIES FOR TOMORROW

"Four and six - ten."
"Five and five - ten."

A wraith-like arm of mist moved between them with animal eagerness. Ms. Persson hastened her step until she could again see the man in front of her. She stayed close as he half-slid, half-climbed down the far side of the slope. Cornelius ignored her, lost in his own thoughts. There were roots protruding irregularly from the gradient. Stone limbs of petrified trees, a forest stilled to silence centuries ago by an unknown cataclysm. The nature of catastrophe forgotten. The roots were in many cases as thick as a man's thigh, providing useful purchase on their perilous descent. Fingers scrabbling in the ground found only crumbling shingle, dissolving into harsh grit. Shrouded in dressing gown and his breath Jerry slid from protuberance to petrified root. The only sound his laboured breath, the mocking laugh of dislodged pebbles.

Ms. Persson, her hair falling about her voluminous cape followed the man in mute acceptance. As the base of the slope was neared spectral shapes materialised in the mist. Leathery grass fought up from the ash. The slope less pronounced now. He walked stooping into the valley beyond. The mist an observer, an intangible wall at the limit of visibility, yet encroaching with stealth. The grass grew more profusely across the floor of the hollow. Looking neither left or right Jerry led the way through the cloying mist deeper into the natural valley. The grass grew healthier as they walked, even skeletal living bushes survived, in greater numbers the further they penetrated. Then the forest of dead trees broke abruptly. Between twin lines of stone sentinels, barring their path, was a tall fence of wire mesh. It was silver in the dim light of the stars, a forming layer of ice like dancing cobwebs spun across its surface. It was three metres tall, flowing as far as the eye could see without violation along a meandering path.

As though the process of distilling his thoughts into words was unfamiliar, Cornelius spoke slowly. "We must have come in a circle, back to where we started." The success of the sentence prompted him to say more, but his eyes moved faster, seized and identified an oblong metal plaque positioned half-way up the fence. He read the symbols aloud, tasting each unfamiliar syllable. "STRICTLY NO ADMITTANCE" he read. "TERMINAL CANCER SANATORIUM."

I DON'T WANT A HOLIDAY IN THE SUN, I WANNA GO TO THE NEW BELSEN

ABSTRACT MUTILATION, PHANTASMAGORIC INTERLEWD ANNIHILATION, LYSERGIC GENOCIDE, MANDRAX STIGMATA, HIROSHIMA HAEMORRAGE, SYNERGIC ATROCITY IMBALANCE.

Langdon stood up, adjusted his spectacles. Beyond the window, crows were still circling, the mist turning the colour of rust as the sun set. "Does the term "Conjunction of the Million Spheres" mean anything to you?"

Cornelius felt a knife turning somewhere in his stomach. For the first time it occurred to him to wonder where he was, and by what right this man interrogated him. But

the resentment was subsumed by weariness. The need for subterfuge subverted by lack of volition. A drug? Some subliminal implant? Whatever the reason, his motivation was gone. He nodded dully. "A point in the multiverse cycle, a conjunction or alignment of worlds and alternate worlds."

"Do you consider it to be an actual cosmological - or supracosmological - phenomenon, or merely a personal cellular symbolism?" offered Langdon smoothly.

Jerry could not form a reply.

"Capitalopolis," said Bastable, "is the ultimate cancer. The scab of impurity on the flesh of time."

"I've never really thought of it like that," conceded Jerry.

"Well, now you've thought - what are you going to do about it?"

Cornelius glanced around the cold cellar nervously. It seemed strange to think that somewhere the sun was shining. That above the Bunker. Above the crumbling riverside slum that had thrust itself into his life, with its unbidden questions, the city was still smouldering, without him. In the book on his lap it said "revolution is the festival of the oppressed". He no longer understood. Could not make value judgments. Remembered the night before his escape from the Sanatorium. Recalled each detail of the room he'd been allocated, the curtains drawn, the Tibetan mandala over the cold fireplace, the wardrobe of smart Carnaby Street fashions, even the lettering down the spine of album covers, "JIMI HENDRIX", "DEEP FIX", "HAWKWIND", the titles of sprawled magazines, "TARZAN ADVENTURES", SCIENCE FANTASY", "NEW WORLDS", a London A-Z street map open at Ladbroke Grove.

His mind stopped pacing. Everything in the room was 1960s memorabilia. This was 1987. Surely he had a stake in the 1980s? He tried to think of events before his incarceration. Remembered the assassinations he'd carried out: Lord Mountbatten and Airey Neave ... when? Motives eluded him. Something to do with the Right Wing coup enacted in '83 in which they'd be figureheads. Or was that on a different plane of the Multiverse?

He blinked away the images. The stranger, Bastable, sat opposite him, his only contact so far in this austere, cynical, bleak negative city. This pessimistic decade. This strangely unfamiliar London, Tanelorn, Melnibone ...

"What do you think happens to fictional characters," said Cornelius, "when their creator dies?"

Bastable looked pensively at the floor. "I've no definite ideas, only impressions. I envision a writer's eyes closing, I envision a fleeting, refuge-seeking consciousness straining through salt pores seeping slowly into the earth. It's distorted to bizarre convolutions as different strands run together and merge like fluid, ideas trickling from the cooling brain, returning to formless source. All imaginings, all dreams, all fictions in there, leaking into riddles. That's how I see it."

THE GREAT COUNTERFEIT MEMORY SIN-DROME

SPIRAL SYNAPTIC HOLOCAUST, CEREBRAL CORTEX CRITIQUE, INSANITY RADIO, SINEWAVE SICKNESS, EXISTENTIAL NECESSARY WEAPONS FOR MODERN SURVIVAL.

"Five and two - seven."

"One and one - two."

The manacled youth's eyes widen. He squirms lasciviously, penis moving, lapping at his undulating stomach, half-erect in an agony of anticipation.

The triumphant gambler stands. Unsheaths the ornate rune-sword. To the youth on the black vinyl it's an act of sexual penetration. His cells clustering limpet-like, sucking at the steel thirstily, spit-bubbles and saliva down his chin, teeth piercing the tissue of his lower lip, drawing blood.

The gambler withdrew, the blade quivering, red and gorged. The stealer of souls. The phallic plunderer, life devourer.

The youth's shell dry as husk. It crumbles, gradually imploding as they watch. A fine dust silting the floor.

ALTERNATIVE APOCALYPSES

LOBOTOMISED JAGGED CEREMONIES, SANGUINARY RITUALS, CONTAGIOUS CORRUPTIONS, DIGITAL PENETRATION, AMYL NITRATE, PERMISSIBLE PERSPEX AMBIGUITY, JAZZ DRUGS.

There's a bank of video screens set into the wall. Cornelius became aware of them during his third day in the cellar of the Bunker. Watched flickering images of himself. On one screen mist veiled frozen trees like a cloak, like a living thing. It moved in folds, in eddies, swirling round the stumps of great dead trunks, washing up sensually against the electrified perimeter fence. The visual representation of Cornelius stood bewildered, his dressing gown open and flapping dismally, Ms. Persson kneeling in front of him, head dipped delicately into his groin, thin lips trapped around his penis, cheeks pulsing.

On a second screen he was fleeing like a maggot through labyrinthine gleaming, cooling body-tissue hunting cancer cells, through into the cool drunken air of cancerous catacomb lungs. The spirit of darkness snapping at his heels.

There are rib-bones in the snow, the fetid breath of burnt-out tank shells littering Siberian ice-fields. Black flags snap dismally.

The ruins of the Sanatorium on the horizon, glimpsed through silver breath and the parted reeds in a wash of lunar-pale light. Canine teeth have devoured the horizon leaving jagged phalluses poking into a dancing microscopic semen-ocean sky.

On the final screen eyes are closing, behind the eyes all imagining, all dreams, all fictions are leaking into riddles ...

PERFECT PORNO LACERATIONS, TOXIC TULIP OVERKILL, PROBABLE CORROSIVE VIOLENCE, JAZZ NARCOTIC, GUERILLA ATTRITION, TERMINAL CHOREOGRAPHY, VISCERAL MANOEUVRES.

"Let me offer an analogy. I have here a desk calculator, product of extreme miniaturisation. I also have an Intertel print-out unit capable of regurgitating all manner of information to supplement my faulty memory. It's not yet widely known but technology's been taken way beyond such limitations. During the last decade, and increasingly over the last five years , miniaturisation's been taken to the point where both devices can be fused and implanted direct into the back of the hand, allowing instant computation and data retrieval."

Cornelius nodded, unable to search out Langdon's conversational drift.

"Indeed, it's possible to insert such a micro-unit into the cerebral cortex, so doing away with the need for manual operation altogether. The memory merely has access to a vast new fund of knowledge, the numeration ability heightened to rival the most complex of free-standing computers. There are additional, more ambiguous factors, particularly in the field of memory supplements, it becomes difficult to differentiate between real and implanted memories. An individual can, for example, be altered completely by the substitution of his or her memories. Psychiatrically this can be an attractive proposition, a reliable method to edit case histories direct, to change events retrospectively. Politically it can be used as a control mechanism ..."

"What has this got to do with me?" interjected Cornelius.

"Bootleg memories? Black-market implants? Counterfeit memories? I think you know what I mean Mr. Moorcock. The mind is a remarkably rational machine. It constructs its own defenses, its own logics. If it finds reality unacceptable it can replace that reality with a new reality. It controls all sensory inputs, it can design self and the universe into any configuration it pleases. Is that not so Mr. Moorcock?"

"I don't understand. I am Jerry Cornelius."

Langdon removed his spectacles in a gesture of futility. "Multi-dimensional adventurer? Androgynous Messiah? Hermaphrodite superman? Please be realistic. Don't confuse the author with his fictions. Don't confuse creator with creation. Don't take refuge in escape mechanisms."

"In the Multiverse all possibilities coexist."

"But this is 1986 not the late '60s. We no longer believe our Nietzschean myths, our dilettante posturing, our macho narcissistic preening. This is the Terminal Cancer Sanatorium. There's no escaping biological inevitability. We must accept it, not construct elaborate and desirable fantasies of alternate selves, alter egos ..."

"I am Jerry Cornelius," he asserted, abruptly standing. The chair careened away behind him to fall backwards soundlessly. "I am Jerry Cornelius." He looked down. Through the transparent tissue of his hand he could see the blurred image of the desk's bevelled edge. As he watched, the wood-grain in the laminates became clearer and the hand less substantial, until nothing occluded clear visibility of the desk.

SOURCES OF PUNCTUATION QUOTES:-

"The Stars that Play with Laughing Sam's Dice" by JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE (Track 604007 - single)
"Second Hand Daylight" by MAGAZINE (Virgin V 2121 - LP)
"The Great Banana Hoax" by the ELECTRIC PRUNES (Reprise 20067 - single)
"Sign of the Hammer Vol. 2 No. 1" (February 1976 issue)
"Anarchy in the UK" by the SEX PISTOLS (EMI 2566A - single)
"Germ-Free Adolescent" by X-RAY SPEX (EMI Int 573 - single)
"Breakfast in the Ruins" by MICHAEL MOORCOCK (New English Library ISBN 450-01409-6)
"Forever Changes" by LOVE (Elektra EKL 4013 - LP)
"The Female Eunuch" by GERMAINE GREER (Palladin paperback ISBN 586-08055-4)
"Holidays in the Sun" by the SEX PISTOLS (Virgin VS 191 - single)

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dll is not as it Seems

(or the second missive)

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bright and early
MISTY morning
A Stride the shallow groove.

—ooo—

Kid of Cold War
asleep and dreaming
far away from life.
TRAVELS LIGHTLY
NEEDS NO INCISION
Parries the SURGEON'S KNIFE.

—ΔΔΔ—

SLOWLY WAKES and,
SPIRIT WILLING
tries to gain the ground
PICKS UP FEET AND,
ACCIDENTLY,
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